

Madame
A Play in Three Acts



By
Gilda Varese
and
Dolly Byrne

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CHADRON (NE) STATE COLLEGE



Enter Madame



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Enter Madame

A Play in Three Acts

By

Gilda Varesi and Dolly Byrne

Introduction by
Alexander Woolcott

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FOREWORD

On a sweltering evening in mid-August, 1920—a night of rumbling thunder and wilted collars and ruined dispositions—this comedy called *Enter Madame* slipped quietly into New York by way of the then idle Garrick Theatre and immediately established itself as one of those happy plays which cause stampedes at the box office. The fame of it spread with unusual rapidity. Pilgrims to the great city always arrive with one hand guarding their luggage and the other extending a slip of paper, on which they have jotted down the names of the pieces they intend (or rather hope) to see during their visit. Long before the aforesaid hot spell had entirely abated, it was noted by the sensitive ticket agents that one play was recurring persist-

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ently in all those aspiring lists. That play was *Enter Madame*.

Whereat there was rejoicing among all those who like to see whatever is fine-grained and creditable to the theatre greeted with that kind of overwhelming popular support which the pessimists insist is always reserved for what is gross and cheap and tawdry—great rejoicing, indeed, among those who knew, or came to know, something of the story that lay behind the writing and the acting of it. Such back-stage snooping as this implies is often disillusionizing and almost always unwarrantably intrusive. But some glance into what might be called the personal history of *Enter Madame* is justified because it involves not only the manner but the matter of the play.

It is a motley story, one that pokes back a hundred years among the dusty laurels of Italian opera, makes such ambitious leaps as a journey from Rome to Chicago involves, and sketches, in shadowy outline, the tragic

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figure of one for whom the brilliant and satisfying première of *Enter Madame* came just too late.

This play was written by Gilda Varesi and Dolly Byrne, though, in its earliest days, the identity of Varesi herself as one of its authors was discreetly hidden behind the *nom de plume* of Giulia Conti. The Madame who enters (and exits) like a dazzling and somewhat disturbing comet is a world-famous prima donna, a spoiled, petted, whimsical, stormy lady whose alternating tenderness and tantrums make up what is most easily described and dismissed as a comedy of temperament—just as if that loose description did not fit nearly every comedy which survives in the theatre.

This Madame Della Robbia is just such another first lady of Italian opera as was Elena Varesi, whose sweet voice and unforgettable charm made her welcome every season in all the citadels of opera from Berlin to London. Elena Varesi reigned in the

Foreword

eighties, herself the daughter of the great Felice Varesi for whom the baritone rôle in *Rigoletto* was written and the granddaughter of that enchanting Luigia Boccabadotti who was such a favourite in Rome in the days when Chateaubriand was writing enthusiastically about her to Madame Récamier in Paris. It was of such glory that Gilda Varesi, Elena Varesi's older daughter, trailed the clouds when she came into the world.

Now, her most vivid memories of her mother are of a radiant lady, who, when her tours permitted and she happened to feel that way, used occasionally to sweep down on startled Milan where her two daughters had been installed under the wing of a formidable nurse. There would be a shower of gracious gifts and endearments and maternal solicitude crowded into a few exciting days and then the prima donna would go whirling on in her course, perhaps to take the baths at Aix, perhaps to burst on London for a dazzling, fondly cherished engagement at Covent Garden.

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Sila Varesi, the younger daughter, is even now singing in Milan. That Gilda Varesi, who gave no operatic promise whatever, did not grow up to grace some provincial stock company in her native Italy is due to the fact that Madame Varesi, when the loss of her voice through illness banished her from opera, was minded to migrate to some distant land lest she be for ever tormented with the memories of the glories that had passed. Somehow, she hit upon Chicago as an exceedingly distant land and there she set up shop as a teacher of singing, that twilight of opera wherein dwell those who have sung their last rôles surrounded by those who have yet to sing their first.

When the book of Gilda Varesi's life comes to be written, instead of being darkly foreshadowed in a mere preface, it will have to tell something of those early Chicago days; of lessons learned arduously at a school of elocution and as arduously unlearned in the actual theatre; of Desdemona's grief conned in secret and roared aloud in the woods to the

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natural agitation of the birds and squirrels. It will recount the first earnest efforts under Ben Greet, when the young novice played even the mob so strenuously that Mark Antony quite pardonably raged at the difficulty of co-operating with a Roman populace that would persist in sitting on the corpse of Cæsar. It will describe the first meeting Madame Varesi reluctantly arranged with Modjeska, who heard the young aspirant out in stately silence and engaged her for the next season, but at the same time pronounced the following doom: "She is thin and homely and an artist. On all three counts, the American theatre will have none of her." If that story is ever really written, it will—it must—suggest something of the inexpressible pathos of a dethroned opera singer, grown old and stout in threadbare exile, but still trying gallantly to recapture for her wide-eyed daughter's instruction something of the secret and the fire of a dimly remembered triumph at far-off Covent Garden.

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There will be tales of comic adventures on tour with the veteran Modjeska. It will try—probably in vain—to reproduce something of the curious impression that must have been made in semi-rural communities by “Mary Stuart,” when that German poet’s foray into English history was translated and valiantly enacted by a Polish Mary and an Italian Bess.

It will tell of the lucky meeting with Mrs. Fiske and of the lessons learned in that most nourishing of all dramatic schools—Mrs. Fiske’s company. It will tell of her little triumph as the Italian woman of the tenelements in *Salvation Nell*, a rôle that came to her when she was still in her early twenties. Of course that shining success doomed her, in a theatre which has a besetting passion for reproduction, to a wearying succession of just such scrawny tornadoes and season after season slipped by without the chance ever coming for her to play a protagonistic rôle or even what the people of the show shop call a straight one. It is true that in her capacity

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as the greatest and most dangerous American understudy she was able to play for a little time the rôles of Modjeska in *Macbeth*, Doris Keane in *Romance*, and John Barrymore in *The Jest*. And these were feathers in her cap, bright feathers, but they adorned a cap she was obliged to wear when no one was looking.

So it was not until *Enter Madame* was produced—and this play of hers and Mrs. Byrne's got its hearing at all, thanks to the enthusiasm of Brock Pemberton, who, in directing and presenting it, made his début as a producer—that Varesi really came into her own. Mind you, this account of her twelve years' struggle is not intended to be read with the tremolo stop out. Mere absence of stardom is not acutely pathetic. During those twelve years, the theatre supplied Varesi with praise and enough to eat, which is all any one needs in this world. Her prestige was sufficient to satisfy any one—except, perhaps, Elena Varesi.

Madame Varesi had sternly opposed this

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daughter of hers even attempting the stage, so vivid were her own time-enhanced memories of its heartaches. She had believed the post of an obscure school-teacher more to be desired than that of an obscure actress—certainly for a Varesi. The occasional raptures of the London and New York critics, which must have been relayed on to her in Chicago, may have pleased her, but they probably did not satisfy her. We shall never know, but we may always guess, that she thought them paltry reward for one whose very great-grandmother had been very great indeed.

Enter Madame was produced in August, 1920. Elena Varesi, who had been its inspiration in more senses than one, did not see it nor read of its reverberant success. Death had released her in June of that year.

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT.

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Enter Madame

Produced by
Brock Pemberton
with the following cast

GERALD FITZGERALD

Madame's husband . . . *Mr. Norman Trevor*

MRS. FLORA PRESTON

A widow *Miss Jane Meredith*

TAMAMOTO

Mr. Fitzgerald's servant . . . *Mr. George Moto*

JOHN FITZGERALD

His son *Mr. Gavin Muir*

ALINE CHALMERS

John's fiancée *Miss Sheila Hayes*

BICE

Madame's maid *Miss Michelette Burani*

THE DOCTOR

Her personal physician. . . *Mr. Francis M. Verdi*

MISS SMITH

Her secretary *Miss Minnie Milne*

ARCHIMEDE

Her chef *Mr. William E. Hallman*

MADAME LISA DELLA

ROBBIA *Miss Gilda Varesi*

Albert Bannister, Stage Manager.

ENTER MADAME

ACT I

A bachelor library in an Apartment Hotel in Boston. At R. a mantel flanked by two windows. In front of it a comfortable chair. On the mantelpiece a large clock, pipes, pouches and boxes of tobacco and cigarettes, pipe holders, etc., are thrown in the greatest disorder. A large fire is burning in the grate. At the centre is a library table encumbered with papers, books, blueprints, letter-stands filled with letters, etc. At back a large glass door opens on a corridor. Along the corridor from R. people enter the room from the outside. The corridor to L. leads to the kitchenette and dining room of the apartment. Down stage at L. a door opens into the bedroom. In the remaining space a sofa and chairs are grouped. On a small table is a silver coffee service. The grand piano is littered with old magazines.

At rise Gerald is walking up and down restlessly, smoking a pipe. Enters a handsome

Enter Madame

blond woman exquisitely and conservatively gowned in morning costume. She has a comfortable corseted figure, a placid, shrewd face. She speaks slowly, soothingly, with a poise that is never shaken. She seems to carry her frank middle age like a decoration.

FLORA

Well, my dear boy, how is this for promptitude?

GERALD

(Takes her in his arms and kisses her fondly.)

Flora dear, on time to the dot. By Jove I can't get used to it. You're a miracle; if you'd come floating in at the window or had shot up through the floor it would not seem more wonderful to me than to have a woman keep an appointment on time.

FLORA

You poor darling boy! Such a life as you must have led. . . .

(Noticing pipe.)

Act I

Naughty, naughty, smoking like a chimney.
What did Flora say only yesterday. . . .

GERALD

I know, dear, but I'm so nervous; it's a
sedative you see.

*(She sits in chair and pours out his
coffee, puts in milk and sugar, and
hands it to him.)*

Won't you have some?

FLORA

Don't bother about me, thank you. I've
had my breakfast. I always have it at 7.30.
"Early to bed . . . early to rise . . ."

GERALD

And you'll meet no famous people.

FLORA

You're so clever, Gerald. You're always
saying the wittiest things. I pride myself on
having a sense of humour, and yet I can never
think up things like that.

Enter Madame

GERALD

Neither can I. Some more famous humourist said that. Some column conductor, I suppose. Seems to me every bright thing you hear at the club comes from one or the other of them. Do you ever read them, Flora?

FLORA

I try to sometimes, but I never find anything very funny in them, and besides I don't seem to find time to read anything but the headlines.

GERALD

This is awfully good of you to put yourself out like this to give me breakfast.

FLORA

Why dear, it's no trouble at all. That's the advantage of living in the same building. All I have to do is take the elevator.

GERALD

It's a comfort to have you so near.

Act I

FLORA

Don't you have anything but coffee for breakfast?

GERALD

Can't eat. Coffee is a stimulant, you know. I'm in such a nervous state that every time I think of food, especially in the morning, every nerve in my stomach seems to stand on end.

FLORA

There, there, nothing to get worked up about. Flora is here now. You ought never to eat standing. That's what keeps you thin.

GERALD

That's right. Fine for the figure.

FLORA

Whenever your nerves try to get the better of you, take some deep breaths and say the multiplication table backwards. Some great man used to do that—Buddha or Christopher

Enter Madame

Columbus or Henry James. Well, someone like that, dear.

GERALD

You make a lovely picture sitting there.

“But well thou playest the housewife’s part
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart.”

FLORA

Oh, Gerald, did you make that up about me?

GERALD

No, but the poet who wrote that was a lucky devil. He was half starved all his life, but he had a wife who stuck to him and starved with him.

FLORA

To starve is a shiftless sort of a thing to do it seems to me and I never could bear artists of any kind. They don’t seem decent to me somehow. So many of them are foreigners,

Act I

but it isn't that, because I know some very nice French people, and once I met a charming Russian. But artists seem so immodest, so gauche, if you know what I mean. Every time you pick up a paper you read something about their divorces, their stolen jewels, or their twins.

GERALD

Twins! Few of them stay married long enough for that.

FLORA

Oh, my dear, I hope I haven't said anything to hurt you. I almost forgot about Madame Della Robbia. John's train must be late. You expected him before this, didn't you?

GERALD

Yes, the young upstart should be here by now. What's keeping him, anyway?

FLORA

I suppose John must be more like his mother than you. You know the artistic

Enter Madame

temperament crops out, like drink, or insanity. I've noticed it before in John—never on time, and his taste in cravats!

GERALD

Oh, well, he is young. Wait till he gets through college before we criticize him too severely. After all he's a manly, likable chap, though heaven knows we were never very congenial. Now, before he gets here there are some things I feel I must tell you. When I wrote Lisa to ask her to divorce me I told her that she wouldn't suffer financially, that if she let me go without a fuss I'd see she was well taken care of. There's the difficulty. That's one of the things we've got to face; Lisa is a most expensive person.

FLORA

But, my dear, she must make heaps of money.

GERALD

God knows what she does with it! She never has a cent put away. She calls on

Act I

me to make up the deficit at least twice a year.

FLORA

You mean to tell me a prima donna as popular as she is doesn't even make enough to pay her bills. Then all these stories of artists' fabulous salaries you read in the papers are lies?

GERALD

No, some of the figures are real enough. Lisa is one of the best paid prima donnas in Europe, but she's generous, lavish, she has the taste of an oriental, she—well she's Lisa. What's the use of trying to explain her. Wait till you see her. I wonder, Flora, whether you have any conception of what my married life has been. To be hustled continuously about the world, to be for ever readjusting one's digestive apparatus to the atrocious cooking of a dozen different nations, to spend one's waking hours in the foyers of hotels and amid the maddening babel of the back-stage

Enter Madame

regions of opera houses, to use one's home only as a coaling station or dry-dock, and to be free not even then from the trillings and tootings and mi-mi-mi's of the prima donna and her musical entourage who hover about her and are at once atmosphere, press agents, and Greek chorus. In fact, to be the husband of the prima donna, to be referred to by a London paper as Mr. Gerald Della Robbia and to be nominated by a New York newspaper wag as President of the Only Her Husband's Club. Such has been my life. Divorce has always seemed a detestable, crude thing to me, a sort of public acknowledgment of failure and defeat, and yet I know, Flora, that you with your womanly heart will see that the failure was not altogether my fault. Marriage is a game, but lord, it's not solitaire.

FLORA

Yes I know, Gerald dear. I am sure it wasn't your fault.

Act I

GERALD

But this is what I started to say when the memory of the past twenty years unlocked my tongue: As soon as we see Lisa and arrange this thing harmoniously, I am going to fix a substantial marriage settlement on you so that you will be provided for no matter what happens.

FLORA

Oh, Gerald, how generous of you.

GERALD

Nonsense. And now if you don't mind you may give me a kiss.

FLORA

Dear silly boy—there. (*Kisses him.*)

(*JOHN and ALINE enter unnoticed.*)

JOHN

What again!

GERALD

(*Furiously.*)

Again, what do you mean by again! Why didn't Tamamoto show you in?

Enter Madame

JOHN

I don't know, but he didn't.

GERALD

(Working himself up.)

Well, why didn't he? That was my question.

JOHN

The same thing happened last Christmas when I came home. If I'd known it would happen again, I wouldn't have brought Aline.

FLORA

Gerald, explain to him immediately—the very idea. . . .

GERALD

(Thoroughly worked up.)

You'd no business coming in like that—I told you last Christmas that you'd no business coming in like that—and here you go and do it again! How dare you, how dare you do

Act I

the same thing again, how dare you disobey me. . . .

FLORA

(Furiously.)

It *isn't* the same thing! Remember of whom you are speaking. There's never been a breath against my reputation. Oh what a dreadful situation! That's what comes of doing a kindness.

(Starts to go.)

GERALD

No, Flora, no, stay where you are.

FLORA

Not another minute. . . .

GERALD

Wait Flora . . . Flora, this is Miss Aline Chalmers, . . . John, this is Mrs. Preston, who has done me the honour, . . . well . . . my future wife.

JOHN

Your what?

Enter Madame

FLORA

Well I do hope it wasn't the same thing last Christmas.

GERALD

(Soothingly.)

Not at all the same. Now please don't be unreasonable.

FLORA

And you mean to stand there and tell me that in this same room . . .

GERALD

(Quickly.)

It wasn't at all the same. I had the table on the other side of the room.

JOHN

(Coming forward.)

I say, what about mother! . . .

GERALD

I am coming to that. That's why I asked you to come home before the end of the term.

Act I

I've got a lot to say to you. But look here, where are your manners. Why don't you ask Aline to sit down?

ALINE

(She has stopped near the door.)

Oh, I am so sorry, I—please, I must be going.

GERALD

Perhaps it would be just as well. You see all this has an explanation that's as plain as the nose on my face—but you mustn't speak of it to your mother yet; it's premature, she wouldn't understand—wait till I catch Tamamoto.

JOHN

(Bitterly.)

I'm glad Aline came along. She might as well know what kind of a crazy family she's marrying into.

GERALD

Whom's she marrying?

Enter Madame

JOHN

Me!

GERALD

You! Rot! Rot I tell you! Why you aren't old enough to earn cigarette money.

JOHN

(Looking meaningly at FLORA.)

Look here sir, I'm old enough to understand that my fiancée ought not to be here—
Come Aline.

FLORA

Wait, please. If you don't explain to those children at once I'll never look you in the face again.

GERALD

Sit down the pair of you. Aline might as well know now as later. John, your mother is coming home!

JOHN

(Sarcastically—as they both sit on sofa.)

Indeed!

Act I

GERALD

Yes—as usual she won't write if she's within reach of a cable. Not even the news I had to give her about Mrs. Preston could shake a letter out of her.

JOHN

(Warmly in defence.)

It's her warm heart. She loves to know that what she feels reaches you as soon as possible—warm from her fingers as it were.

(Touched by his own eloquence.)

Lord, Governor, how can you treat her so!

GERALD

*(Has pawed out the cables and is arranging them chronologically as he talks.
Stung by the reproach.)*

Yes, the warmth of her fingers has to reach me by cable. Mighty little warmth has reached me otherwise. You know nothing at all about it, you young romancer.

Enter Madame

JOHN

Well, she has her profession, hasn't she?
If you loved her you'd stay with her.

GERALD

Well, I have my profession, haven't I?

JOHN

(Sulkily.)

Never saw you break your neck over it.

GERALD

(Furiously.)

Much you know about it. I work like a
dog.

JOHN

(Sulkily.)

Just about. Never saw a dog work yet.

GERALD

Now look here, I won't tell you anything
more if you are impertinent.

Act I

FLORA

Now wait Gerald. Of course we expected John to take his mother's part.

GERALD

(*To JOHN.*)

Go along with her if that's all the advice you've got to give. Do you want me to be the husband of the prima donna, and to carry her poodle through all the capitals of Europe? I've done it enough! Never again!

JOHN

You should have thought of that before. This is an insult to mother, and puts her in a damnable position.

GERALD

There you go off at half cock. You don't know anything about it. How can you understand the feelings of a grown man. I want a home. I want my own fireside. I want to see my slippers toasting by the hearth when I

Enter Madame

come in after a hard day's work. I want the ministering hands of a woman.

JOHN

Rot. You are tired of mother and you want a change—why don't you say so?

GERALD

There you see Flora, what's the use!
(Gesticulates with the telegrams.)

FLORA

Never mind. You can't expect him to understand all at once. It's natural devotion to his mother.

GERALD

Nothing of the sort. He's scarcely seen her either, since he was a youngster and used to trail around Europe after her in search of a liberal education.

JOHN

She's my mother, and I'll see she gets a square deal.

Act I

GERALD

(Shouting.)

Who wants to give her anything else?

FLORA

That's right—everything will come right if we'll just keep calm. Read the cables.

GERALD

(Calming himself.)

Yes, here they are. All concise and away off the point. But I've gathered that Madame intends to come home. The first is from Madrid:

“Oh, my Gerald, these golden autumn days mock the misery in my eyes. LISA.”

JOHN

She's broken-hearted. I won't stand for it. Do you hear?

GERALD

Hear them all, and then judge:

“Spain, land passionate and ascetic. The

Enter Madame

night long I danced until the Duke of Alva stole my slipper. LISA."

FLORA

Dear, dear, what a liberty to take!

JOHN

(*In arms.*)

Well, she couldn't help that, could she?

FLORA

Perhaps not. But she needn't boast about it.

GERALD

The next came from Barcelona:

"I fled the opera quite at once in the middle of *Salve Dimora*. The turmoil of my flight rumbled behind me in the silent streets. A mob like angry bees sought me in vain. I found peace on a tall ship that rocked. LISA."

FLORA

Mercy what a long cablegram. Is it in cipher?

Act I

GERALD

Oh, no. Lisa, you must remember, is a foreigner.

FLORA

Yes, yes, of course, dear.

JOHN

And a very nice thing to be. Mrs. Preston, you talk as though it were some disease. She's the most wonderful woman in the world. I can read right through to what she was thinking and suffering when she sent those cables.

GERALD

I don't believe your mother's got a heart when the music stops.

FLORA

It's a dreadful waste of money.

ALINE

I think she's a darling. How did those foreign officials get those cables right?

Enter Madame

GERALD

She probably stood over them with a stiletto. Lisa isn't one to have her effects spoiled.

ALINE

It's very beautiful and poetic, but what does it all mean.

GERALD

Trouble undoubtedly. All Madame's most strenuous arguments are conducted in *verse libre*.

JOHN

After all, why should she care? She's probably jolly glad to get rid of you, if the truth were known.

GERALD

Look here! If you expect to talk like that to me, get out of my house. Good Lord, here I am trying to be frank and calm and sensible, trying to talk to you as if you were a man and

Act I

an equal, to see if we can come to some amicable solution of the problem. . . .

FLORA

Now patience, patience, dear. John . . . may I call you that? It seems absurd not to, under the circumstances.

GERALD

Call him anything you like. That's much too good for him.

FLORA

Of course, John, you are beautifully loyal to your mother. We expect nothing else of you. But won't you consider just a moment what an unsatisfactory life your father has led?

JOHN

He always seemed to me to be jolly well off.

FLORA

That's only his dear courageous way—why he's been a wanderer on the face of the earth; he's had no home; he's been so lonely.

Enter Madame

JOHN

I've never noticed him alone, not long enough to make a very deep impression on me.

GERALD

Now that will do. Never mind Flora—don't listen to him. This last telegram came some days ago. I gather that if Madame stowed away on that rocking ship it was probably heading for America. So she ought to arrive very soon.

(Fishes out the morning paper.)

I phoned last night to the lines that stop at Barcelona or start from there, but her name is not on their passenger lists. She may have travelled incognito. She'd love that. She's probably posing as an escaped queen. She won't miss a chance, that's sure. Come in.

(TAMAMOTO comes in after a discreet knock with a telegram on a tray.)

Oh, halloo there. Another cablegram.

(Exit TAMAMOTO.)

(Tears it open.)

Act I

"Arriving. Steamer *Mongolia*. In my heart is peace and blessings for all. My arms are filled with roses. LISA."

(Tears it up.)

JOHN

(Rising.)

Great!

ALINE

Is the ship in?

FLORA

What a pleasant message. I knew she would understand.

(GERALD has been looking through paper.)

GERALD

(Reading the ship's name.)

Mongolia—Lord bless us. It's in!

(There's a silence.)

JOHN

Do you think she'll come here to stay?
With us?

Enter Madame

GERALD

The place was big enough five years ago.
Unless her retinue has grown in the meantime.

JOHN

Do you think she is bringing the whole
cavalcade along?

GERALD

She left in such a hurry she may have overlooked 'em. From past experience we'd better keep away from the boat. Six feet of you, John, would be a blow to the Della Robbia pose of perennial youth.

ALINE

Surely she'll be crazy to see John.

JOHN

(At the window.)

Don't bother about me, Aline. Mother and I understand each other. We don't have to show off.

Act I

GERALD

(Calling into next room.)

Tamamoto. . . . Isn't it like her to drop on us like this.

(TAMAMOTO enters.)

Here, Tamamoto, pack up my things and send them over to the club. And order some flowers.

JOHN

(Excitedly.)

I'd go for flowers myself only I am afraid to miss her.

FLORA

I'll run along and drop in when you've all met . . . just offhand you know. Oh, my dear, I wish I could help you see it through.
. . .

GERALD

I'll take you to the elevator.

(Exit.)

Enter Madame

JOHN

Disgusting! Never mind, Aline. I know you'll love mother. She's wonderful!

ALINE

She must be John—because she is your mother.

JOHN

Do you know sometimes I wonder how I can love you both so much. You are so different.

ALINE

Perhaps that's why. With such a famous mother I don't see how you can be interested in me. I'll never be famous. Will that matter?

JOHN

Why no. Don't ever change. Always be just you.

ALINE

My poor little engagement! I thought it was such big news last night. No one said a

Act I

word about it except to mention the fact that it's all rot!

JOHN

(Coming to her.)

Mother won't make fun of it. You wait. I don't know what to do. I don't dare go down for fear of disgracing her with my long legs . . . I hope mother won't mind too much that I'm a man.

(Enter GERALD. Much noise is heard behind him.)

GERALD

Alarums without. I've got stage fright.

(A tremendous noise is heard outside of Italian, French, Russian, Japanese, American. Enter first BICE. She's short, fat, birdlike in face and movement. She is dressed fantastically, in a manner to compel attention. Her voice is shrill and hard with sudden flashes of tenderness. She is a mix-

Enter Madame

ture of undying devotion, utter rascality, meanness, and generosity.)

Well, Bice, still alive. How are you?

BICE

Signor Geraldo. Madonna benedetta. How beautiful, how young you look.

(He tries to help her with her shawl.)

No thank you. I can do that myself. Ah! Tamamoto! *guarda fammi il piacere aiutami.*

TAMAMOTO

(Very cross.)

No understand. . . .

GERALD

Tamamoto, you are to do what Bice says.

BICE

(Loading him with her hat and cloak.)

Bring here immediate portmanteaux Nos. "15" and "22" and open them on the floor. Go! Quick!

(Sees JOHN.)

Giovannino, il Signor Giovannino.

Act I

JOHN

(Embracing her.)

Dear old thing, it's good to see you.
Where's mother?

*(TAMAMOTO goes into bedroom with his
burden.)*

BICE

Right away your mother she come. My
how tall he is! He was like that.

(Indicates height.)

JOHN

This is Miss Chalmers, Bice.

BICE

Riverita Signorina.

*(Curtsyng. Then to JOHN, wagging a
knowing finger.)*

Ah! the little bride already—eh?

ALINE

How do you do, Bice! Can John and I
help you?

Enter Madame

(While BICE is talking TAMAMOTO has come from the inner room staggering under valises and has opened them on the floor. BICE, as soon as this is done, flurries about him like a hen—her flouncy wide skirts fluttering like wings.)

BICE

Yes indeed, Madame she likes to have her home wherever she go—she's all for cosy, all for home, you remember that Signor Geraldo?

(GERALD grins from ear to ear.)

Put these ornaments on the mantelpiece—here are sofa pillows, scarves; the picture frames belong on the table. Madame likes to have her friends about her. Have you flowers? Good, put them in these vases. Tamamoto, get a basket and clear away all the papers from that table; go, go quick!

(GERALD rushes to rescue some files of letters.)

(As the ornaments are being put in their

Act I

places TAMAMOTO returns with a large basket.)

Aline, put these candles in Madame's room.
She hate sudden light. She want all soft.

GERALD

We're not getting young are we, Bice?

BICE

Ah, Monsieur will have the shock of his
life. Madame look seventeen.

*(BICE takes the basket that TAMAMOTO
presents to her and holding it under
the mantelshelf she sweeps into it all
the tobacco jars, cigarette boxes, and
odds and ends.)*

There you go!

GERALD

(Helplessly.)

Yes, there you go.

*(TAMAMOTO exits with them.) (BICE
sees GERALD in arm-chair.)*

Enter Madame

BICE

Ah, beg pardon, but this is Madame's corner.

(GERALD *disgustedly crosses to sofa.*)

BICE

She brings her home wherever she go. You remember that.

GERALD

Yes! Don't I!

BICE

(*Looking about room.*)

Oh, what a change already.

(TAMAMOTO *enters with a large wreath, white dove in centre.*)

GERALD

Holy Moses, who's responsible for that?

BICE

Ah! Signor Giovanni, who done that! My God, who has done that to my madame! She will yell without a doubt!

Act I

GERALD

(Who has read the card.)

Ahem! A friend sent it, Bice.

BICE

Santi Bendetti!

GERALD

That stays, Bice. Put it here, Tamamoto!

BICE

Ah! but it is wonderful! Although Signore, if you permit—The little dead bird up there. In Italy we say he bring bad luck.

GERALD

In America we have no bad luck!

BICE

(Shrugging her shoulders.)

Eh! *fortunati loro*, so much the better!

(The room has now been transformed into an ornate, bizarre, and comfortable apartment. The last traces of poor Gerald's reign have entirely

Enter Madame

disappeared. Enter chef from back with TAMAMOTO.)

(The cook's voice has never ceased for a moment, and though TAMAMOTO does not make a sound, the immobility of his face would strike terror to the heart of any cook less determined. As it is the chef is frightened.)

CHEF (ARCHIMEDE.)

Vieni qui Bice per l'amor di Dio. Ah!
Signor Geraldo, *servitore suo.*

GERALD

Archimede, you old sinner, what's the matter?

ARCHIMEDE

It is just you I must see—I am cook—My duty I must perform. Without me Madame she die. Of course she cannot eat the mess of the foreign gentleman there. He very handsome. Oh yes I do not say. He make fine piece of statuary if he sit cross leg—

Act I

but cook that is me. I am cook from head to foot. He say "I cook." I say, "I cook." He say, "My gentleman must eat me." I say, "Madame never eat nothing that is not me." And yet the machine in there is like that.

(Makes two little circles with the thumb and first finger of each hand.)

How can we cook together!

TAMAMOTO

(Intensely.)

I am cook this place. No one go my kitchen.

GERALD

Ah! Now we'll see some fun.

ARCHIMEDE

(Persuasively, almost in tears.)

But Madame. She cannot eat you. She want me, me. Saints in Heaven, do I cook in my hat?

Enter Madame

GERALD

Tamamoto, during the stay of Madame Della Robbia her chef will do the cooking.

TAMAMOTO

I do not like noise. I do not like. Old man make slop—fat woman make confuse—parrot, dog, cat, orders pass around my head like a strong hail. No can do—go.

(TAMAMOTO *bows and exits.*)

GERALD

(*Aghast.*)

God bless our happy home!

ARCHIMEDE

(*Blithely.*)

Grazie, Signor Geraldo. I go, I go. I cook such dinners, you lick your fingers.

(*Exit.*)

BICE

(*Excitedly.*)

The screen! Madonna we forget the screen. Archimede, *il paravento!*

(ARCHIMEDE *runs to the door.*)

Act I

Is it in the kitchen! If we have left it on the sheep! We are all lost. Madame die of pneumonia, of the consumption from draft.

(Enter DOCTOR dragging screen. It is a magnificent Chinese affair.)

Ah! *Grazie al cielo. Grazie dottore.*

(Enter MISS SMITH.)

(JOHN helps BICE place the screen behind Madame's chair.)

GERALD

Hello Doctor. How do you do Miss Smith. It's a blessing you found the screen. I'd have been a raving maniac.

(At R. of DOCTOR.)

MISS SMITH

They put it with my baggage! So absurd

(Thumping her chest.)

Do I look as though I needed a screen?

GERALD

No indeed! This is John. You remember John.

Enter Madame

DOCTOR and MISS SMITH

Oh Madonna! }
Hasn't he grown!} (*Together*)

DOCTOR

I rejoice to see you both so well and beautiful. Madame she come now. We have a little trouble at the custom. I must hasten to prepare the nerve tonic. *Scusatemi.*

(*Exits.*)

MISS SMITH

You will excuse me. I always take a cold bath before my work begins. Excuse me! Excuse me!

(*Exits.*)

BICE

(*She's gone out during talk and returns.
In a hushed excited voice.*)

Enter Madame.

(*Yelling to cook.*)

Archimede, the broth, Madame come—quick, quick.

(*Exits.*)

Act I

(GERALD stands with his back to the mantel. JOHN is up stage eagerly awaiting his mother. ALINE stands near him holding his hand. Enter LISA DELLA ROBBIA. She immediately catches sight of JOHN. For a moment she cannot move, she trembles with emotion, then wordlessly she flies into his arms. A long embrace, then leaning from him she gazes into his face.)

LISA

Johnnie! My little Johnnie has become a man! Ah, how the great earth must sigh as the generations rush by like a mighty wind and drop, as the wind drops, at sunset!

JOHN

(Enthusiastically.)

Gee! it's great to have you come mother. You always knock us off our feet. You look

Enter Madame

ripping! ripping! Doesn't she Aline? This is Aline mother.

(Bashfully.)

Aline Chalmers, you know.

*(LISA quite lost among her poetic similes
blinks a little as the torrent of boyish
enthusiasm pours about her.)*

LISA

Aline! Aline Chalmers?

JOHN

You know mother, Aline——

LISA

(Remembering.)

Oh—oh yes!

(Embraces her. Then looking at her.)

What a dark child. Why more like my child than you. Oh, no.

(To ALINE, pointing to his hair.)

You see, he get that—from his Venetian ancestors.

(Putting them side by side.)

Act I

One, two! Just as one group flowers. Oh
such a beautiful two! Child speak, I want to
hear the timbre of your voice.

ALINE

I don't know what to say. . . .

LISA

Ver' light Soprano, perhaps it will grow.
Now say: I love you.

JOHN

(Shocked.)

She's shy mother.

LISA

Why not! go on!

ALINE

*(Is very shy, then slowly she turns her
face up to John and says in a sweet
trembling voice as if gathering courage
from his look.)*

I love you!

Enter Madame

LISA

Ah, the darlings, the darlings!

(JOHN *points to* GERALD.)

(LISA *sees him for the first time and rushes to him, followed by JOHN who glares at his father. She holds out her hand. He takes it and kisses it.*)

GERALD

Lisa, it's always The Great Day when you come.

LISA

Is it my Gerald. Then I must rejoice that I have come so far!

(*She lays one hand on her husband's shoulder and the other on JOHN'S as they stand on either side of her and says softly:*)

Two such big men and one little woman.
Why did I stay away so long? My Gerald's

Act I

hair grows grey and our boy has become a man!

GERALD

(Down L.)

Don't take his six feet to heart, my dear. I couldn't very well keep him in short trousers till you came, but I'm quite young enough to do for both.

LISA

Life has rushed by me like a swift wind, and the sound of my voice singing silly little tunes has deafened me to the rush of its passing.

(JOHN and ALINE are deeply impressed but GERALD looks at her with a whimsical smile. LISA is hurt by it.)

Ah, of course, I forgot. This is America. Here when the heart speaks, the lips say "Fine weather we are having." Ough! Where are my servants? Where is Bice! Bice!

(BICE enters.)

Enter Madame

BICE

Si Signora—un momento.

(LISA hands BICE her hat and offers her shoulders to have her wraps removed.)

LISA

(*Furiously.*)

Ma come, "Un momento!" Sono ore che mi lasci li colla roba addosso—ore!

(*Turns and sees GERALD in her arm chair.*)

E lasci che la gente si sieda nella mia sedia!

(BICE, sees GERALD in the arm-chair. *Motions for him to leave, which he does disgustedly.*)

(*Sits in her arm-chair triumphantly and motions to ALINE to kneel near her.*)

Dear child, tell me your name once more.

ALINE

Aline . . .

LISA

Aline! In Italian "Ali" means wings. You look like that, child a bird with swift

Act I

white wings. Now fly off with my John while I rest. Fly off but not too far; just where I can hear the twitter of your voice and glimpse the flutter of your wings—the little dove. Au revoir my darlings.

(DOCTOR enters. LISA sees him and immediately sinks back into the chair moaning gently. Exit children.)

GERALD

(Starts up to go to her, but sees the DOCTOR and lays back on sofa.)

DOCTOR

(Down to L.)

Ah Signora mia che imprudenza! Always she eats herself up. She must drink this at once.

(At the doctor's command LISA tastes the medicine, finding it bitter she makes a face and waves it away.)

I command. And then completely she rest . . . two . . . three hours.

Enter Madame

LISA

(*Weakly.*)

Oh dottore! Life demands that I be strong.

DOCTOR

With rest will come strength.

GERALD

The doctor is right. Of course you must be tired. I'll go now.

LISA

(*Coming to life at once.*)

No! no! I will not sleep—*vada via dottore*—*la prego*—There is much I have to do—later I rest—Now I must speak with my husband.

GERALD

(*Rising.*)

My dear, there's plenty of time.

LISA

No! *norol*

(*To the DOCTOR, motioning him away with a smile.*)

Act I

Vada!

(The DOCTOR stands his ground stubbornly presenting his medicine.)

(Sweetly, as if conferring a favour on a child.)

All right! I take the medicine.

(Seeing the DOCTOR still determined to insist on her swallowing the stuff in his presence.)

I'll take it—I promise most faithfully!

(DOCTOR goes shrugging his shoulders. Exits. LISA in looking for a vase or something into which to pour the doctor's medicine comes across Mrs. Preston's bouquet.)

Madonna mia, Gerald, did you bring that thing for my grave?

GERALD

No Lisa, Mrs. Preston of whom I wrote you . . . she . . .

LISA

Ah! I see. She sends a peace offering.

Enter Madame

. . . The little dove—She is subtle this lady!

GERALD

My dear girl, you will twist things your own way. She just wished to be kind, to welcome you, that sort of thing.

LISA

Ah! that sort of thing. Gerald, it's wonderful. It is as if she stood in the room.

(*Shivers.*)

So that's who she is.

GERALD

Nothing of the sort— She was in a hurry. She probably bought the first thing she saw. To me it looks like a naïve, but warm and sincere impulse.

LISA

Mine was an impulse, warm and sincere. Did I do well to come? Are you glad to see me?

GERALD

To see you has always been my delight.

Act I

The trouble is I haven't had enough of it to keep me from starving.

LISA

And from now on you wish to die of starvation?

GERALD

Oh no! That's not my intention. Just to try some other kind of nourishment.

LISA

(Nodding toward flowers.)

Ah! it will not agree with you, it's rather heavy fare.

(Thoughtfully.)

That's what puzzles me. So she looks like that! Until now your amourettes were more like a series of *hors d'œuvres*.

GERALD

Lisa, this lady, well—it's a difficult thing to explain in a letter. You see my life with you has been colourful, but snatchy. It has been more like the experience of a playgoer.

Enter Madame

At intervals the curtain came down and I left the theatre of your presence always regretfully, always eager to come again, and with the sense that it wasn't real and couldn't be expected to be real—that was the fun of it and the charm of it—but it's an awful pace to keep up. Frankly I don't see how you do it!

LISA

Ah, and now you no longer care to go to the play, it is October in your life,—the landscape glows, the sun is still warm, but the evenings are chilly and you like to sit by the *fire en famille*, in your slippers. . . .

(*Points to them.*)

GERALD

Lord, I haven't had time to change. . . .

LISA

And the lady of the dove will sit opposite in that big fat chair, which she will completely fill . . . and she will . . .

(*Rises.*)

My God!



GERALD: "You see, my life with you has been colorful, but snatchy."

Act I

GERALD

Now, that doesn't appeal to you, does it?

LISA

(With fervour.)

Oh no!!!

GERALD

Well, there you are, you see . . .

LISA

(Change of mood. Apparently making the best of it.)

All right, all right. I am a woman of the world. I understand. It was nice to talk it over quietly together. *Mon ami,—bon ami—la!* Shake hands *à l'anglaise—en bon camarade!*

(Offers hand.)

(They shake hands.)

GERALD

My dear Lisa, I am no more blind today than I ever was. To me you are the most fascinating woman in the world.

Enter Madame

LISA

Oh, thank you. That makes it easier for me to tell you my little story . . . the real reason for my coming. . . .

GERALD

What now?

LISA

Your letter arrived at a most opportune moment. I also have met someone, not too young, not too old, not as old as you, not as young as me. Just right you know. He is a great poet, no money he have, no jewels to bring to me . . . just his heart and his poems he lay at my feet . . . when you write me of the American Lady I say . . . all is well—soon I too can marry.

GERALD

(is dumbfounded for a moment, then he breaks into a roar of laughter. Up and down C.)

Act I

A poet, a spring poet. Oh, Lisa, come off.
I don't believe a word of it.

LISA

Oh, you do not believe eh? You then are the only one who has yearnings! You are tired of romance, you sigh for quiet, for peace, for old slippers! What have I to do with these things? For years you leave me all alone.

GERALD

I leave you alone?

LISA

I am Lisa Della Robbia who is always young. I starve for romance, for poetry. Now I find it and I take it; you can have the old slippers.

GERALD

Don't be a fool, Lisa. If there's anything in this you must be mad. Some fool versifying boy. Where will you get the money to support him? Do you expect me to do it?

Enter Madame

First there is your villa at Viareggio;—then the castle in Andalusia that you bought to make our dreams come true; there's your entourage: Bice, the old ruffianness, the secretary, the doctor, the blooming cook, the dogs, the jewels, these marvellous exits and entrances, these scenic effects. Bah! You have the extravagances of an empress. In spite of all the money you make, the burden has been a pretty heavy one for me. God knows I haven't grumbled. I've realized that you must have your trappings. But now by God this must all change. I've no intention of maintaining a pet poet.

LISA

I, Lisa Della Robbia, am to be thrown aside like an old shoe, to live alone, to wither like an autumn leaf, to die alone. That is my fate which you plan for me. No, I tell you, no. Bah for your money, for your common ideas, your flatfooted slippers—Bah, I say.

(Crosses to front of sofa.)

Act I

GERALD

All of a sudden this passion for romance, this melodrama of dying alone. For years I've begged you to come back to me or to let me be with you and what did you answer me. You must be free. You must be alone! I've been nothing to you, nothing mattered, nothing but your own headstrong way.

LISA

I am Della Robbia. Love is my master and my slave. I am young as eternity, old as the moons, wise as the stars.

GERALD

Oh stop, Lisa! Stop acting!

(Grabs her arm and jerks her back on to sofa.)

Now you listen to me. You're a conceited middle-aged woman, whose career is on the wane. You never were a beauty at any time in your life. You've been spoiled and petted; self has been your God and you've served

Enter Madame

him well. You've done what you pleased and never counted the cost. Oh, you've had your fill of fame and glory, and what was our part—John's and mine—in your game? Even now we couldn't meet you at the boat. We mustn't be seen. We might spoil the scenery. You know how we yielded to your whims and even now, God help me—I can't stand quietly by and see you make a fool of yourself. A poet—bah! Look, I'll show you something.

(Holds the mirror to her face.)

(She draws back.)

You are growing old, Lisa! There's too much rouge here. Too much make-up, too much trouble to gain your effects. How dare you speak of poets, of romance. You're growing old, Lisa, old I tell you, old!

(Throws mirror on table. Stands watching her.)

LISA

(Slowly rises, her face bathed with tears.)

Am I so very old Gerald, too old for you to love, too old to love you?

Act I

GERALD

(Impulsively runs to her and takes her into his arms.)

Lisa! Oh, it's good to love you, and it's not half bad to kiss you either. I dare say that's all you want. I tell you Lisa it isn't that I'm not grateful to you. Why you've been the most exquisite, magnificent, the most ideal mistress a man ever had.

LISA

Gerald. . . .

(Pushing him away.)

GERALD

What else would you call it? Have you the faintest idea of what it means to be a wife?

LISA

Gerald.

GERALD

You've lived with me, but have you ever been a wife to me? Why, my dear girl, have you ever stopped to think that if I hadn't

Enter Madame

been the impetuous, well brought up young fool that I was, I need never have married you. It wouldn't have made the least difference.

LISA

Gerald! This is too much. . . .

(Crosses to L.)

GERALD

Just a few hurried words before a justice of the peace. And the joke of it. . . . The first thing you did was to lose your marriage certificate, the next thing was to lose your ring! The other day I looked for my marriage lines and I'll be hanged if *I* know where they are. . . . In order to prove we are married at all I'll have to hunt up the files of the Archives in Milan. And look at our life—God the whole thing is the damndest joke there is.

LISA

(Angerly.)

Gerald, I'll never forgive you the longest day I live. Very well, then divorce, divorce,

Act I

you shall have it. Oh, I wish I had it here now that I might throw it in your sneering face.

(*Enter TAMAMOTO.*)

TAMAMOTO

Mrs. Preston calling. . . .

LISA

(*Hysterically.*)

No, no, no, go away, I won't see her! I *will not* see her.

(*Exit TAMAMOTO.*)

(*To GERALD.*)

Go, go, go, I don't want to set eyes upon your face again.

GERALD

(*Exits.*)

(*LISA, left alone stands for a moment as if turned to stone. Then a tremendous paroxysm of rage shakes her from head to foot. She is very still, very silent, wave upon wave of fury passes*

Enter Madame

down her rigid body; she twists a helpless pillow in her hands; twice a scream seems about to break from her throat but each time it is painfully choked back—finally catching sight of FLORA'S unhappy bouquet, with one sweep of a stiff arm she drags it to the floor. At the noise of its falling the doors open, and her servants all rush to her. The chef with a cup of broth; BICE with a fan, while the doctor carries her to the arm-chair. They all gather about her.)

(JOHN enters.)

JOHN

Mother dear, mother.

LISA

(Shrieking hysterically.)

John, John, he has broken my heart. I only wanted to be loved. What have I done to deserve all this!



LISA: "He has broken my heart! I only wanted to be loved."

Act I

JOHN

I am here mother, I'll protect you. I'll give my life to you.

LISA

(Absentmindedly patting him.)

Thank you Johnnie dear, thank you.

(Then weakly.)

I must rest—Oh, what a face I must have!

JOHN

You do look tired!

LISA

Do I look old?—Oh, Madonna! Do I look very old! Bice—send for someone—a facial massage, a hot bath, a masseuse, *presto per l'amor di Dio*——

(Exit BICE at R.)

JOHN

Doctor, can't you give her something to make her sleep?

Enter Madame

LISA

Johnnie dear. . . .

(Raises herself half to her feet.)

This is check? but not yet *checkmate!*—this is war but not defeat! . . .

(Enter BICE with a beautiful tea gown.)

BICE

See Madame what I get for you! Isn't it beautiful?

LISA

(Looking at the tea gown.)

(Suddenly forgets her troubles, she smiles up at BICE, her breath still catches in her throat as the hysteria subsides slowly.)

Ma guarda quanto e carino! tutte quei ghiri gori sono interessanti! ma Sai ci vorrebbe qualche cosa con un po piu di brio un po piu di slancio!

CURTAIN

ACT II

The time that elapses is the time it takes to get the first decree of divorce. It is early afternoon and Madame is taking her nap. The little parlour is bathed in the soft glow of the sun and of a large fire that is burning in the grate.

BICE, MISS SMITH, *the* DOCTOR, and ARCHIMEDE are standing together in a hushed group, thoughtfully, sorrowfully, like people who have just received a blow. BICE is crying.

BICE

Ah, my Signora, my gay little Signora—it will kill her.

MISS SMITH

(Deprecatingly.)

Oh I don't think it will *kill* her.

Enter Madame

THE DOCTOR

Spirits of ammonia and perhaps I will even go so far as a mild injection of morphine, ver' mild, ver' mild; with Madame one must be careful, the reactions are too violent.

ARCHIMEDE

I will cook her risotto that will be better. I have know her to eat it with gusto when she was in such sorrow that the tears run down her face into the plate.

BICE

Oh, you all—you don't know her as I know. These last two weeks I sleep in there. Every night she go to sleep on my breast like a child. "Bice," she say, "perhaps he come back tomorrow" every night she say, "perhaps he come back tomorrow" and I say, "but Madame refuse to see him when he come." "Perhaps he come anyway," she say, "perhaps he break in the door and cry: 'my Lisa!

Act II

the sun is gone out of my Heaven, since Lisa is gone out of my life!"

MISS SMITH

Mr. Gerald is an Irishman, isn't he?

BICE

Yes.

MISS SMITH

Well, then perhaps he might behave that way.

DOCTOR

Mr. Fitzgerald has come again and again. I open the door to him myself once; he say: "I want to apologize to her, doctor, try to persuade her to see me," but she would not.

BICE

(Goes to door of bedroom and listens.)

She wanted him to break in the door. Now it's too late.

MISS SMITH

The best thing is work—she must plunge right into work. Weissman wants her for a

Enter Madame

concert tour, it's an amazing amount of money. He's been pestering the life out of us. She might as well take it. We must urge her to take it.

(*Enter JOHN.*)

JOHN

(*To MISS SMITH down C. rises goes up C.*)

Where is she? I came as soon as I got your message. Does she know already?

BICE

She's still asleep. We thought it would be better if you broke the news to her.

JOHN

Is that the lawyer's letter?

MISS SMITH

(*Hands him the letter.*)

It's the announcement of the court granting the decree of divorce.

Act II

JOHN

We'll have to take mother back to Europe now. I'll go along of course. I suppose father will want to marry right away, and mother mustn't be here.

BICE

Oh, no! Nothing of the kind, the old libertine will have to wait. I beg your pardon of course, but he is a pig and a libertine that breaks my Signora's heart.

JOHN

Why would he have to wait?

BICE

It is the law.

MISS SMITH

The decree will not be absolute, except after the lapse of three months.

JOHN

Why then they are not divorced.

Enter Madame

	BICE	}	
Oh, yes.			
	MISS SMITH		(All
It's a formality.		}	Together)
	DOCTOR		
They are divorced.		}	

MISS SMITH

It's just that they can't remarry before the three months are over.

(From the inner room comes a cascade of coloratura, trills, runs ending with:
"Bice, Bice, Bice!"

"Vieni sul, mio core amore!" The door is thrown open and LISA enters in high good humour fresh from a good sleep. She wears an entrancing negligee, and her hair is loosely knotted. She stands smiling brightly on the assembled crowd of worried people.)

Act II

LISA

(Brightly.)

Guarda quanta gente! Cosa, c'e. Oh Johnnie all dressed up, where are you going? Johnnie, don't look like that no matter what has happened you must not look like that. Never! Miss Smith—out, out! you know I cannot bear to wait, I never wait! What is, What is, what is! Quick!

MISS SMITH

(Quickly handing paper.)

The first decree of divorce.

(LISA takes the paper, she looks at it, she looks at it a long time. The crew of dependents stiffen and get ready, the DOCTOR edges quietly towards the glass of spirits of ammonia and takes it into his hand; BICE gets into position to catch her if she drops, they all look tense.)

LISA

(Wistfully.)

He did not break in the door!

Enter Madame

(Then with sudden tenderness.)

My dears, my friends, all worried about me; how lucky I am to be so blessed. Bice, *Vecchia amica! qua dammi un bacio.*

(Kisses her.)

Dio ti benedica, vecchia buon'amica—cari tutti, thank you. There, that's enough, we need calm, strength, thought. It is not all over, oh no! Please go—open a bottle of wine, Archimede, all drink my health. *Da bravi—via coraggio!* I will be alone with my son.

(They all exit quietly, rather dazed with a few broken murmurs; the only things they can think of.)

(LISA left alone with her boy returns to her sad mood.)

He did not break in the door.

(Sits on the sofa.)

JOHN

(Sitting on arm of sofa.)

You are an amazing woman, mother, you never do what's expected of you.

Act II

LISA

No one does what is expected of them, it is such a puzzle. They say there are great pitch black spaces between the stars, I think they are between the people too, oh quite pitch.

JOHN

Pitch black, darling.

LISA

(Absently.)

Yes, pitch, very pitch. Now you are my son, and yet you do not understand me, nor I you. You stand up there, and there's blood of mine running very busy in and out of all the little veins; there should be thoughts like me darting about the brain I gave to you—why are there not?

JOHN

I grew up away from you, I confess, it's hard for me to understand you.

LISA

Yet you love me?

Enter Madame

JOHN

Yes, mother, very much.

LISA

You love Aline?

JOHN

Yes, mother, very much.

LISA

You say the two just alike, there is not one speck of difference in the tone. You don't feel just alike?

JOHN

You can't go about feeling and shouting about it, you know. It isn't done.

LISA

(With a flash of understanding.)

Ah!

(Then thoughtfully.)

What would you do if Aline should say to you: Go away, go away, I don't want to see your face again.

Act II

JOHN

I'd go.

LISA

To stay?

JOHN

Of course.

LISA

Could you live without her?

JOHN

Yes, if I must.

LISA

Monstrous!

JOHN

Mother dear, do you love my father?
Would you mind telling me, that is . . .

LISA

Mind? Why should I? It is a privilege
to have a great feeling to express and why
should I keep it to myself? Imagine it,

Enter Madame

Love? Why I can sing love as no one else can.

(Sings.)

“ Vieni, vieni, fra le mie braccia, amore, delizia e vita non mi sarai rapita, fin ch io, ti string ’l cor.”

(Rises.)

What a phrase, my God, what a phrase! What a phrase! Do you realize, you cold blocks who go to the opera, the soul that we burn before you, the melody pours like incense smoke from the censers that are our hearts?

JOHN

Yes, but is that loving father?

LISA

Why, you blockhead, do you believe I think of the fat little tenor with the short neck, and his eyes full of food, when I sing that?

JOHN

But what good can it do father to have you sing to him when he isn't there?

Act II

LISA

We are almost always together in the summer. Oh the romance! I always sing it all into my music afterwards.

JOHN

But don't you see . . .

LISA

(Testily.)

No, I don't see—why I love him the most beautiful way! All my heart throbs in my throat—why do you suppose the birds sing?—for a living perhaps: . . . the nightingale for a thousand a night whistles her sorrows to the moon? No, it is the necessity to express in music the great tragedy of love,—it is the dramatic soprano of the birds, the lark is the lyric, the canary is the coloratura singer.

JOHN

But mother . . .

Enter Madame

LISA

Oh, I cannot explain . . . I wish I could—perhaps it is something like this . . . you know a little of electricity?

JOHN

Well, I am going to be an electrical engineer one of these days.

LISA

It is a force—it is a force of life, hunting, hunting for a way to express itself. Sometimes it finds cold blocks that it cannot move at all, that is a non-conductor, eh? Sometimes it finds a way, and the rush of the force . . .

JOHN

. . . moves trains and ships, and lights cities?

LISA

(Hurriedly.)

Yes, yes, I prefer the glory of the storm.

Act II

JOHN

Sheer waste.

LISA

Oh, I don't know about that, I only know that the storm is beautiful, moving, sublime! Now there is a force of feeling . . . hunting, hunting to express itself.

JOHN

The force of feeling, as you call it, lights hearths and makes homes.

LISA

Yes, yes, and the storm of feeling makes art! I am a cross current!

JOHN

Well, how can father enjoy life if you short circuit him all the time. . . .

LISA

(Struck suddenly.)

I don't know, I don't know. I only know

Enter Madame

that I am unhappy. I wander about here touching the things that belong to him. I sit here in his chair

(Sits there.)

and imagine that I am curled up in his lap, only the arms don't come together around me . . . they just stick out—

(LISA beats the arms of the chair in a fit of childish temper; then suddenly remembers her son.)

Oh, how can I make you understand—you, young, you with your quiet love and your cold science. You see, it's like a little message over you, Marconi that has got lost. Sometimes one hears them weakly beating against the keys across leagues of stormy seas. S. O. S. S. O. S. Oh, give my love back to me—or I die!

(JOHN takes her in his arms.)

JOHN

Mother dear, I wish I could help you—can't you accept Weissman's offer? It would

Act II

take your mind off things. Wouldn't singing help you to forget?

LISA

Oh, no, John dear, music vibrates in the memory. My life with Gerald is so closely woven through with song, that if they were to pluck my Gerald out, the rest would fall in little heaps of ravellings all about. Oh, I could not bear to sing.

JOHN

What are we to do, mother?

LISA

(Restlessly.)

Yes. What are we to do? What are we to do? I have thought of many things. I've thought of many ways to win him back, but he's not like other men, he pricks my little bubbles—he'd say: Come off, Lisa, come off—don't act—and what am I to do?

Enter Madame

JOHN

It doesn't seem to me it's any use thinking of romance now. I'm not quite sure it would be dignified. Father's not behaved very well.

LISA

He's been a pig.

JOHN

That's just it. If you were to go on refusing to see him and to go away without a word it would be no more than he deserves.

LISA

Oh, no, I couldn't bear to do that.

JOHN

Well then, see him once, shake hands with him quietly, say that you hope he will be happy. . . .

LISA

I'll wear my black velvet trimmed with chincilla! . . .

Act II

JOHN

That you will think of him kindly and that you hope he will be happy.

LISA

You said that before.

JOHN

It sounds dignified.

LISA

But you don't have to say it twice, once will do.

JOHN

Well, anything you like, but . . .

(Enter GERALD, he stands irresolute, holding his hat.)

LISA

Ah!

(JOHN makes movement to get out. LISA holds him back.)

John come back at eight and bring Aline.

(Kisses him.)

Enter Madame

JOHN

(*At door.*)

Good evening, sir . . .

GERALD

Good evening, see you soon.

(*Exit JOHN.*)

LISA

Won't you—sit down? I must apologize for my costume. I have been asleep, and then John came—*et—me voici*. . . . This is scarcely the costume for a divorcee. I must be careful now.

GERALD

Never mind your clothes. I broke in on you,—I . . . have been wanting to see you since that awful day. I didn't want you to go away remembering the things I said. I don't know what came over me, I think it was because you tried to make a fool of me.

LISA

I tried to make a fool of you!

Act II

GERALD

You did, you know, Lisa—you did try . . .

LISA

The other lady never tries to make fool of you?

GERALD

Oh, dear no, she hasn't the wit.

LISA

Oh, I don't know, a woman's wit it isn't always on the surface.

GERALD

It's you I want to speak of. I was so beastly about your age, as if you could help it.

LISA

Gerald, you know you are not my husband any more and I must have respect from men who are not my husband.

GERALD

Good Heavens, I don't know what I'm saying. I was so afraid you'd slip away with-

Enter Madame

out my having another glimpse of you. You know you look exquisitely young tonight.

LISA

(Furiously jumping to her feet.)

Again my age, but you know, Gerald, I am getting tired of my age!

(Enter ARCHIMEDE with a large cooked goose on a platter.)

ARCHIMEDE

Si po' Signora cosa ne dice, eh? Cold roast goose!

GERALD

The bird of peace!

ARCHIMEDE

Si Signore! Stuffed with capon, sweet breads, sausage meat, and rosemary. . . .

LISA

(Sniffing joyfully.)

Truffles—mushrooms, macaroons, and cream.

Act II

ARCHIMEDE

All chopped ver' fine.

LISA

A dash of Tokay wine.

GERALD

Ah, frankincense and myrrh—oh dreams of
Araby!

LISA

I have it, I have it.

GERALD

What's that?

LISA

(Triumphantly.)

You come and sup with me!

GERALD

By Jove!

LISA

And bring the lady.

Enter Madame

GERALD

What!

LISA

Why not? The bird of peace—a nice cold supper. . . . I have a good champagne. . . .

ARCHIMEDE

Bravi, bravi!

LISA

Can you get ready quickly?

ARCHIMEDE

I have a salad that is a dream of spring!

LISA

Gerald—rush, get the lady! I dress—like a flash!

GERALD

By Jove, Lisa, you can't be beat!

Act II

LISA

You bet your life I can't be beat! Bice!
Bice!

(Runs to door R.)

(Enter BICE R.)

BICE

Si, Signora. . . .

LISA

Signor Gerald is coming to supper! Is not
that splendid!

BICE

(With a cry of joy.)

Ah! Grazie al cielo!

LISA

And he bring the NICE lady that he is to
marry!

BICE

Oh, my God . . . *Ma perche' invitare
quella donna!*

Enter Madame

LISA

Sta cheta! lascia fare a me! Mi metto il
. . . nuovo Paquin! Corri da brava facciamo una toilette coi fiocchi!

(Runs to C.)

(BICE exit.)

Dottore! Miss Smith, quick! quick!

(Enter DOCTOR and MISS SMITH L. C.)

(R. C. ARCHIMEDE follows with tray, table-cloth, etc.)

My husband is coming to supper with the lady he loves. We have supper as soon as possible. Be darlings and help to get ready.

(Exit LISA into bedroom.)

DOCTOR

Per bacco! With joy, with joy!

MISS SMITH

(Stays rooted on the door-sill a second.)

DOCTOR

Come, come, Miss Smith, your reactions are too slow.

Act II

MISS SMITH

Oh, all right, all right.

DOCTOR

The great secret of speed is scientific organization, efficiency.

MISS SMITH

Give me a sample by moving that divan into that corner.

DOCTOR

All right. Archimede *una mano*.
(*They move divan.*)

MISS SMITH

Be careful. Don't jam the furniture.

ARCHIMEDE

It's all right, Miss Smith. It no belong to Madame anyway.

MISS SMITH

There's a foreigner for you. Now, move the table down a little, now the table-cloth.

Enter Madame

My word is she going to eat off brocade again?
I should think under the circumstances she'd
like to eat like a Christian.

DOCTOR

Oh, Miss Smith, you have not the soul of
the Artist.

MISS SMITH

No, thank God.

ARCHIMEDE

(Throws napkins in places.)

MISS SMITH

Stop throwing things. Where do you think
you are. This isn't an Italian table d'hote.

*(During the setting of the table LISA is
heard singing off R. while dressing
for supper.)*

ARCHIMEDE

All right Miss Smith.

Act II

MISS SMITH

Oh, we have enough singing. Let's have some supper.

(The table is ready. The DOCTOR enters with two candles, placing them on the table.)

LISA

(Off R.)

Non Scordate lo Champagne dottore.

DOCTOR

Di certo lo champagne.

(Door-bell rings.)

(BICE runs to open. Enter JOHN and ALINE.)

LISA

(Entering.)

My God, the babies!

JOHN

Mother, you'd already forgotten that you'd asked us to come.

Enter Madame

LISA

I just remember with a shock of joy. The darling children!

(Kisses them warmly.)

ALINE

Oh, how beautiful you are!

LISA

You look sweet, my darling, go in to Bice; lay your wraps aside, look in my glass with the pink lights and see how beautiful you are.

(Exit ALINE into bedroom.)

(LISA turns to JOHN.)

JOHN

What a lot of places—who's coming?

LISA

My Gerald and Mrs. Preston.

JOHN

What?

Act II

LISA

I followed your advice, you say, "see him once say that you hope he will be happy." This is much better; I will make the speech to both.

JOHN

It's a good idea. Of course it's unconventional, but it's sporting and dignified. I am sorry you let Aline come. Aline should not be in on this.

LISA

Why not? It's such a good supper.

JOHN

Well, it isn't exactly the situation in which to put a young girl.

LISA

Mercy, John, where did you get all your beautiful propriety.

JOHN

Someone had to have it in this family.

(Enter ALINE.)

Enter Madame

ALINE

Your room is so exotic I love it! I am going to be just like you when I get married.

(LISA roars with laughter.)

(Enter GERALD and MRS. PRESTON.)

GERALD

(Introducing.)

Mrs. Preston, Mme. Della Robbia!

LISA

(After a pause they meet in front of table and shake hands.)

Delighted. It was so good of you to come.

FLORA

It was charming of you to ask me.

LISA

Just a little family supper. You belong in the family now you know. I don't know yet just exactly what relation we are to be to one

Act II

another, but something surely. My English is so shaky. Wives-in-law, is it not?

(GERALD *stamps his foot angrily.*)

FLORA

I couldn't say—what an idea——

LISA

Well at any rate I feel sure that we should not be strangers. We have so much in common now.

(*Enter DOCTOR and MISS SMITH.*)

My dear family, Mrs. Preston. My doctor, my secretary, of course you know the children. Mrs. Preston, you sit at the head of the table. Gerald, you next to Mrs. Preston—of course. Aline there, Miss Smith here. John on the other side of Mrs. Preston; and *Dottore* near me. It is not a well balanced dinner party, it would never do in a storm, but perhaps it will sail successfully in these calm and sunny seas.

(BICE *and* ARCHIMEDE *serve the supper.*)

Enter Madame

GERALD

Truffles, by Jove, you know. Truffles don't taste like anything as they cook them on this side.

ARCHIMEDE

Those truffles come from my farm in Tuscany. Radames and I hunt for them last June, he with his nose and I with my stick to hit him over the head whenever he find a truffle; he loves truffles, that Radames.

FLORA

Mercy, who's Radames, your son?

ARCHIMEDE

No, my pig, Madame, a great hunter of truffles.

FLORA

What a strange name for a pig.

ARCHIMEDE

Why not Madame? He enjoys it, poor fellow, it gives him style before the other pigs.

Act II

My cow I name Aïda, my ox Don Bartolo—they are all ver' pleased.

GERALD

So you will retire to your farm when you get old?

ARCHIMEDE

Oh, well, some day! I am young yet!

GERALD

By Jove, doctor, that reminds me, why aren't you in Rimini? I thought you had bought a little practice there and had gone to settle down for the rest of your life?

DOCTOR

Oh, yes, I did leave Madame two years ago, the last time you and Madame were together in Viareggio. I had the rheumatism and I got the home sickness. I run down to Rimini where is my old sister. Her husband is dead, her daughter is married. So she say, why you run all around the world in your rheumatism? Stay here, I cook for you. So I stay.

Enter Madame

GERALD

Well, weren't you happy?

DOCTOR

Oh, yes, the people are healthy in Rimini. I have little to do. My sister cook well, my rheumatism go.

GERALD

Well, why didn't you stay?

DOCTOR

Well, I tell you. An opera company come to Rimini and they give *La Forza del Destino*, I go. The soprano is a cow. I beat my head against the seat in front and I yell: No! no! no! *non e cosi che si dice corpo di Bacco!* And I run out. Imagine I hear Bartelozzi in Milan——

LISA

Oh, Bartelozzi.

DOCTOR

Of course she does not compare with Madame but she is a very good dramatic.

Act II

BICE

Ma che—la Bartelozzi non sa cantare.

DOCTOR

Come non sa cantare.

ARCHIMEDE

Se parlasse della Cantini. . . .

BICE

Ma che! la Cantini—canta come una cagnetta scorticata.

(There is a general uproar.)

DOCTOR

Ma tu trovi a ridire di tutte! la Bartelozzi e una grande artista.

GERALD

(Goes to ARCHIMEDE and pulls him away. After quieting them all, he resumes his place at table.)

*Ah si quello e vero grande artista. I've heard her in lots of things. She sings *Valentina* in the *Huguenots* magnificently you know.*

Enter Madame

DOCTOR

Ecco! Il Signor Geraldo, he say so too and he is a connoisseur in the aria with the tenor; what a beauty! Scusateme, I will play it for you.

ARCHIMEDE

I get my flute.

LISA

Yes, yes, Archimede, get the flute.

*(ARCHIMEDE exits and enters with flute.
Goes to piano and plays.)*

GERALD

(Goes to LISA, listens to music; almost involuntarily he takes her in his arms and kisses her; just as abruptly he releases her as FLORA gasps in her fury.)

BICE

(Interrupting music.)

Gia—just what I say.

(Imitates the exaggerated sentimentality of the interpretation.)

Act II

So sentimental and languid—it make your stockings fall down.

(They all return to their places at the table.)

(ARCHIMEDE *exits.*)

LISA

Bice, per l' amor di Dio, ti Scordi davanti alla sposa Americana!

BICE

Madonna mia!

GERALD

Pass the salad! Have some salad, Flora?

FLORA

Thank you, not any more.

GERALD

Oh—so you left Rimini, doctor?

DOCTOR

Yes, the music is in the blood worse than the rheumatism, it make me suffer more; and

Enter Madame

the memories stab my heart a hundred times a day;—and pictures of the past come up quickly in idle moments. A great life of pictures—we lead—I could not stand to give pills and powders—Madame took me back and here I am.

GERALD

A great life of pictures.

DOCTOR

Well, Signor Gerald, this is the last of the jolly little suppers.

GERALD

Your health, doctor.

DOCTOR

We have drink the health together in every corner of the globe. Cairo, Petrograd, Buenos Ayres, Milan—it was not a bad little life.

GERALD

Yes, it was a good little life while it lasted.



GERALD: "It was a great little life while it lasted."

Act II

FLORA

Madame Della Robbia, I hear you are to be married again?

LISA

(Surprised.)

JOHN

What's that mother, you never mentioned it to me. Now that father's gone you ought to advise with me you know.

GERALD

Dash it all, don't you talk as if I were dead.

FLORA

Gerald told me of your wonderful romance with a poet. I understood him to say you were engaged!

JOHN

Why mother!

Enter Madame

LISA

I haven't the faintest idea of what you are talking about!

(The telephone rings.)

Miss Smith, will you answer that?

MISS SMITH

(At phone.)

Hello . . . yes, this is her secretary . . . Oh, no, we haven't decided yet—you see Madame has been so busy—oh, the steamer starts tomorrow?—well, then it's too late—we couldn't possibly be off so quickly.

LISA

Who is that?

MISS SMITH

It's Weissman, he says this is his last chance, that the *Vasari* leaves for Buenos Ayres tomorrow. He wants to know if you won't sign that contract. He's secured passage on the chance that you'll decide to go.

(Into phone.)

Yes—wait a minute. Heavens he's weeping.

Act II

LISA

(Suddenly.)

We go to Buenos Ayres tomorrow.

MISS SMITH

But the boat leaves at one.

LISA

We go at one tomorrow.

MISS SMITH

(To LISA.)

Do you really mean it, Madame?

LISA

Yes, I mean it.

MISS SMITH

(Into phone.)

Yes, madame will be there. Yes, *parole d'honneur*—go ahead and make the arrangements. Oh, all right, all right.

LISA

(On her feet—raising her glass.)

Brindisi! To life, that outruns Chance and

Enter Madame

Love and Death! To Life the Winner of the Race!

GERALD

Le morituri Salutamus!

LISA

Ah la! la! not so! *Brindisi!* to my husband and his wife!

JOHN

(Raising his glass.)

To my wonderful mother!

GERALD

(Rises.)

Let's get Archimede in and have the anvil chorus for the last time.

FLORA

Dear me, I feel as if I were at a funeral, with all these last rites.

GERALD

Oh I don't mean the *Miserere!* just the anvil chorus—Archimede makes a ripping



“To Life, that outruns Chance and Love and Death! To Life, the winner of the race!”

Act II

noise! Archimede you old scoundrel come here.

BICE

(Running to door.)

Vieni, Archimede.

GERALD

Are you in voice, Bice? Bice's got a grand voice, wait till you hear her.

(Enter ARCHIMEDE.)

Here, Archimede, old boy, have a liqueur—and you too, Bice. Everybody—raise glasses! To the virtuoso of the gas range our noble Archimede!

EVERYONE

Bravo! Viva!

GERALD

To our Bice! Long may her tongue wag!

EVERYONE

Viva!

Enter Madame

GERALD

To life. May its memories be gentle, its actualities charming, its anticipations keen.

LISA

The anvil chorus then——

(They all sing it together—all except FLORA, knocking on the glasses and plates and bottles for the noise of the anvils. The old song, the old memories sadden LISA, she cannot join. GERALD sees it.)

GERALD

Stop, stop! We are not in voice tonight.

DOCTOR

I always suffer from catarrh in this country of yours.

(Rising.)

Now Madame, I hope you will excuse me, it is getting late and if we leave tomorrow there is much I must do.

Act II

LISA

Buona notte, Dottore.

DOCTOR

Buona notte, Signora.

GERALD

Hope to see you again doctor.

DOCTOR

Oh, without a doubt—goodnight, Signor Giovanni!

(Down C. to JOHN.)

You will be a married man the next time we meet. Goodnight, Ladies.

(Exits bowing.)

MISS SMITH

I'll go finish those letters, Madame, and arrange for tomorrow. Goodnight, goodnight.

(Exit.)

JOHN

(Rises and goes to LISA.)

It's getting awfully late for Aline to be up.

Enter Madame

I better take her home—do you want me to come back here afterwards? Do you need me?

LISA

No, my darling, but come tomorrow and bring Aline. I may need you then——

(As they are talking BICE and ARCHIMEDE move the chairs back, clear the dishes, and put the room in order. They, however, according to foreign custom leave the glasses and bottles of wine on the table.)

JOHN

Come Aline, put your things on—it's awfully late.

ALINE

No, it's not late, Johnnie, surely you aren't going to

(Coming down C. to front of table to meet LISA.)

leave your mother so early on her last night?

Act II

LISA

He brings you again tomorrow, dear baby. He shall bring you early, very well! at dawn—come at eleven o'clock John! Bice, bring Aline's cloak! I shall be back here for your wedding my little swallow. I shall help you to build your little nest. In the meantime, wear this necklace for me—the pearls seem a little dull—that is because I am not always happy—pearls are like that—on your breast they will soon shine again. To think I shall be your mother so soon!

GERALD

Oh, they are awfully young, Lisa! It's too soon to talk that way!

LISA

I am not sure, Gerald, perhaps if they grow up together, they will grow like a tree into one strong stem that cannot be divided.

GERALD

(Rises.)

Well, it's not a bad idea, a tree can't pick

Enter Madame

up its roots and take the next steamer to South America—or the first damned place that comes into its head.

FLORA

Gerald!

LISA

Goodbye, children, until tomorrow. . . .

JOHN

Goodnight, father.

GERALD

See here, when are you going back to college?

JOHN

As soon as mother's gone.

GERALD

See that you go back tomorrow. You've loafed long enough.

Act II

JOHN

All right, sir—goodnight.

(Exit with ALINE and BICE following.)

GERALD

Damn slacker.

LISA

I am glad to see him play a little, he is such an old sober sides.

GERALD

Puts on airs, needs taking down a peg or two, the young cub.

LISA

Don't let him work too hard, Gerald.

GERALD

I'd like to talk to you about him, and—and . . . other things as well, why the deuce must you run down to Buenos Ayres!

LISA

Why not! I shall earn a lot of money there, you know.

Enter Madame

GERALD

You know I haven't had a chance to talk business to you. You wouldn't let my lawyer do it.

LISA

And I will not let you do it either, Gerald. I cannot talk business to any one. It is too depressing. Look at poor Flora! We must talk to Flora.

GERALD

I'll take Flora away and come back for a chat with you. I can't let you go like this and you've been so unreasonable all this time! Wouldn't see me and all that.

LISA

I will not talk of business, Gerald.

GERALD

Well, then, there's John—John and Aline! how's that? Just half an hour or so—you can't refuse me that, can you?

Act II

LISA

Will Flora mind, perhaps?

(FLORA has been wandering restlessly around the room—hearing this she stops.)

FLORA

(Down R. at end of table.)

You want to talk to Gerald, do you? Why of course.

LISA

(At L. end of table.)

Gerald wants to talk to me.

FLORA

Oh, why naturally.

GERALD

Let me take you home first.

FLORA

(Going to LISA to offer her hand.)

Oh, no, how absurd, it's only down stairs! Goodnight, Madame Della Robbia—such an

Enter Madame

unusual evening! I am really very grateful to you for it. I've never seen anything to equal it in all my life—quite extraordinary.

LISA

Is it really so extraordinary! Perhaps you think *me* extraordinary?

FLORA

Oh dear me yes, but I suppose you have to be like that, if you were not, people wouldn't pay so much money to see you on the stage. You must give them something different to look at I dare say.

LISA

You know, it's very puzzling! To myself I seem quite simple.

FLORA

Perhaps it comes from throwing yourself into every part you are doing. You throw yourself out of joint as it were and end by not knowing how to behave at all. However, I

Act II

am delighted to have met you. I understand Gerald so much better now. I am glad to have had this glimpse into your vivid domestic atmosphere, you are so very original, Madame Della Robbia, I daresay you make a business of that. But you have behaved most becomingly on the whole. Really amazingly well.

LISA

(Meekly.)

Oh, thank you, so much!

FLORA

The situation might have been very unpleasant. Two women squabbling over a man you know,—oh, dreadful! Instead it's been only the question of righting something that had been wrong for many years. Now it's over, would you mind kissing me?

(GERALD, who has been walking nervously up and down the hallway up C., enters in time to see them kiss and leaves the room hurriedly.)

Enter Madame

LISA

Delighted! Are we not wives-in-law?

(They kiss strenuously.)

FLORA

Men are such helpless creatures, that we women must take these things into our own hands. There it's all over, what a relief, aren't you relieved?

LISA

Tremendously.

GERALD

(Entering again.)

Flora are you coming?

FLORA

Yes Gerald darling.

(Going slowly up with LISA to exit door where GERALD is waiting to show her out.)

Of course we won't be likely to meet in the future.

Act II

LISA

I am afraid not.

FLORA

In the meantime I'll leave him in your care.

LISA

Oh, so good of you to trust me.

FLORA

Don't let him tire you. Send him home soon! Goodnight!

LISA

Goodnight, goodnight.

(FLORA and GERALD exit. LISA hurries to piano, powders her face ready for battle. GERALD enters thoughtfully.)

GERALD

(Coming down C.)

Perhaps I am intruding, taking your time.

. . .

Enter Madame

LISA

Oh, dear me no. I am a bird of the night you know.

GERALD

(Both sit in front of table.)

A nightingale.

LISA

Of course.

GERALD

Lisa, I don't want you to change your way of living, I always want to be quite at your service financially, you know.

LISA

Oh, money, Gerald, I haven't thought of it for years.

GERALD

That's right, just go on not thinking of it. When your money gives out, send the bills to me.

Act II

LISA

Of course you know that I will not do that; now—let's talk about John.

GERALD

John's all right. I don't think that children are the absorbing topic of discussion between parents, that they are supposed to be. You and I never discussed John much in our life.

LISA

He didn't seem to need it. There's been very little that we could do for him. He's so healthy, self-reliant. It seems to me now on looking back that I have often worried about you, never about him and yet oh I love him.

GERALD

I know how you feel, the little nuisance even refused to have the measles. John never did his duty by us really. I was always hoping he'd get into some mess or other as he grew up. If it hadn't been for you . . . well, God knows you did your best. . . .

Enter Madame

LISA

Yes, I know. I have been irritating, selfish, I have never given you comfort, you've lived in the tents of the Arabs long enough, I don't blame you for wanting to leave them.

GERALD

Let me take care of you in the future.

LISA

No Gerald, I can't do that.

GERALD

Lisa dear, don't you know that it's dangerous to take away all the trouble of a person at once? A man can't stop smoking, or taking a drug all at once. He has to do it gradually—well it's same thing with trouble.

LISA

Perhaps Flora will have some nice new ones.

GERALD

No hope of that. The great silence will

Act II

close over me. People will go about saying the same things, making the same gestures. Peace, three meals . . .

LISA

(Hopefully.)

In America there are beautiful servant troubles!

GERALD

No, Tamamoto is back with me—so there's no hope in that direction. Let me pay your bills!

LISA

(Smilingly.)

Not a bill.

GERALD

(Rises.)

Lisa, you only do that to be irritating and contrary. Every time I think of something for my happiness it is always the one thing you refuse me.

Enter Madame

LISA

Now it is my fault again! . . . Gerald, you know I have not forgot what you said to me the first day I came back—that I had been only a magnificent mistress to you. . . .

GERALD

(Sits again.)

Oh, Lisa, I would give anything to wipe out the words I said that day . . . it's always so when we get together—you drive me to it, I always say things I don't mean.

LISA

The trouble is that there is always just enough truth in them.

GERALD

No truth at all,—I'd smash any man who dared to . . . I can't imagine what made me . . . Gad, I know, I remember now. It was that damned poet you were going to marry. What's become of him, Lisa? . . .

Act II

LISA

There is no one! There never has been any one. Is there anything else you wish to talk about?

GERALD

No, no, I suppose not.

(Music of flute and piano heard off stage.)

(Telephone rings, LISA goes to it.)

What's that music, Lisa?

LISA

It's Archimede and the Doctor. Allo, allo, oh Flora, yes Flora he is still here,—you want him? At once, you shall have him.

(Comes down to front of table.)

GERALD

(At phone.)

Yes, Flora, what is it? We're getting along nicely. These things take time you know. Yes. I'll see that I get plenty of sleep. I'm not made of cotton wool. Yes, in the morning.

Enter Madame

What? At ten o'clock? Yes, I'll be there promptly. All right, you can expect me. What? Yes, I am just off now. Goodnight, goodnight.

(Rings off.)

GERALD

(Goes slowly to LISA.)

I must go now, Lisa. I scarcely know you in this mood; no tricks; no florid speeches; no poetry; perhaps you are glad to get rid of me. Haven't you anything to say?

LISA

No.

GERALD

Goodbye then, goodbye romance, youth, adventure; as wayward as my thoughts, as graceful as my dreams, as changeable as my desires; a butterfly with wonderful wings, but with emotion instead of a heart.

LISA

Ah! How dare you, how dare you say such things to me.

Act II

GERALD

I know, I have no right to say such things to you, yet they are true. You know that they are true.

LISA

Oh, no. You have said it yourself. As wayward as my thoughts, as changeable as my desires, I was what you wished me to be. I was taught young that my duty was to please and to win applause. An interpreter, that is what I am, that is all you wished me to be. You could have made of me what you wished. Oh, why didn't you try? And now you blame me.

(Lays her head on GERALD'S breast, sobbing.)

GERALD

Darling, I don't blame you, I blame myself.

LISA

Yet you punish me, for being just me!

Enter Madame

GERALD

How was I to know! I am a blundering
ass.

*(Phone rings—angrily goes to door up
C.)*

Stop that damned noise!

(Music stops.)

LISA

(Goes to phone.)

Allo! allo!

(Quickly lays down receiver and shouts.)

It is *she* again.

(Goes down R.)

GERALD

(Yells into phone.)

Hello! Hello! What—yes I know you're
not deaf! I beg pardon . . . what is it? I
know it's late. You ought to be in bed. Of
course I'm thinking of you—what's that?
Nonsense, Flora. After all I'm alone with
my own wife.

(LISA crosses left, gleefully.)

Act II

Well, what's wrong with that? It's true isn't it? Oh, by Jove, I'd forgotten—honest I had—yes . . . yes, I'll go. Well I can't go till you hang up the receiver, can I? Oh rubbish. Goodnight.

(Hangs up.)

LISA

Poor Flora, how old she is!

GERALD

I am a year or two older than Flora.

LISA

Oh, no we are young, you and I Gerald, young! because we still have imagination, illusion, because we still see people as they are not! That is the secret of youth. Yet the world insists upon imposing age upon us, because it is respectable. We are the hope of the world if they only knew. The irreconcilables. But now once more the world has won and you are going to join the great phalanx of the old!

Enter Madame

GERALD

The hell I am ; come here you imp of Satan,
I'll show you how old I am.

LISA

*(Runs upstage and around to front of
piano.)*

The great god Pan is dead.

GERALD

(Takes her in his arms.)

Oh, Lisa, listen to me. Say you love me,
say you love me. What are we to do? What
can we do?

LISA

(Her arms around his neck.)

Ah, Gerald, Gerald; I don't know, I can't
help you.

GERALD

(Holding her desperately.)

Say it isn't too late, say it isn't too late!

Act II

LISA

I seem to hear the sands rushing out, it is almost too late.

(The phone rings. GERALD turns angrily towards it. LISA slips into the bedroom, and leaves the door ajar. The phone rings like mad. GERALD grabs his hat in a panic. Then looks at the bedroom door, has an idea, looks at the phone, hesitates, finally makes up his mind, throws down his hat, lifts the receiver gently off, lays it on the table, goes softly into the bedroom and shuts the door.)

(Enter BICE from back with a glass and a small carafe of water on a tray. She sees GERALD'S hat, looks at bedroom door, then quietly without fuss, she puts another glass on the tray and knocks gently on the bedroom door, as the curtain comes down.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

It is morning—a nice frosty sunny morning. A small table is prepared for breakfast in front of the fireplace. It is carefully laid with a lace cloth—a low bouquet of orange blossoms in the middle of the table. A profusion of white flowers is scattered all about the room. BICE and ARCHIMEDE are tiptoeing about arranging everything, wreathed in happy smiles, talking in a careful undertone. BICE has white satin bows in her cap, white lace apron ornamented with bows, with sprigs of orange blossoms in her corsage. ARCHIMEDE is freshly starched and has a large white bow with orange blossoms on his breast.

BICE

(Speaks with elation.)

Ecco finito. . . .

ARCHIMEDE

Grazioso come un nido di colombe!

Act III

(Starts to sing in a soft undertone after few bars; BICE joins him and they sing the first verse of a popular love song, in as low a voice as possible, but with great glee:)

“*L’amore e una catena
L’amore e una catena,
L’amore eu una catena
Che non si spezza
E se si spezza Oli! Oli! Ola!
Se si spezza mamma, nia
La si po raccomeda
La, la la, la, la la, la, la, etc.”*

(They both dance around the room.)

(Enter MISS SMITH with hat and coat—she comes from outdoors.)

MISS SMITH

My word, what is the matter with the two of you? Isn't Madame up yet? I've done a dozen errands. I've had a talk with Weissman. She can't loiter over breakfast this

Enter Madame

morning, it's nearly half past ten, and you two losing time like this. What are all the flowers for? What is the matter with you? Of all the irresponsible crew! Why don't you call Madame, Bice, you've got to get an early start with the packing.

BICE

(Romantically.)

Ah, mademoiselle, you do it. I haven't the heart. . . .

MISS SMITH

What in the world . . .

ARCHIMEDE

Cannot Mademoiselle guess, it is in the air. . . .

BICE

You can hear the whirring wings of the little loves if you will listen.

MISS SMITH

I think you've both gone mad!

Act III

BICE

The perfume of the orange blossoms—does it not suggest something to you?

MISS SMITH

It certainly suggests that you should open the window—it makes the room very close. I'll knock up Madame.

(BICE and ARCHIMEDE run after her.)

BOTH

My God! No!

MISS SMITH

(Stopping at the door.)

Why not?

BICE

(Beckons her away.)

Come back, come back, and don't touch the door. . . .

(MISS SMITH walks away puzzled at the frantic gestures of the others.)

Enter Madame

MISS SMITH

What's happened?

BICE

(Whispering.)

Signor Gerald . . . sh! sh! sh!

*(MISS S. looks from one to the other—
they continue gesticulating frantically.)*

MISS SMITH

You mean? You don't mean! . . . Mr.
Fitzgerald is . . . my word!

BICE

No more unhappiness for my Signora.

ARCHIMEDE

And such dinners!

MISS SMITH

(Who has got her breath.)

You are a pair of renegades—I've stood a
good deal from Mme. Della Robbia first and
last, but—well! this sort of thing never

Act III

happened before—this is too much. My word!

BICE

What is it that makes you so shocked? Is it not her husband?

MISS SMITH

Her husband . . . he's not her husband any more is he? If he is, he's committing bigamy or something. T'isn't legal, I tell you.

(*Enter DOCTOR.*)

DOCTOR

(*Seeing the flowers.*)

Ah, very nice, good idea—very charming!

MISS SMITH

Doctor, what shall we do? Do you know what's happened?

DOCTOR

Well I can guess . . . do I not smell the orange blossoms, charming idea Bice. Come

Enter Madame

Miss Smith—your morality will suffer nervous prostration if you are not careful. She's a wonderful woman, Madame. Let us run or they will catch us. . . .

MISS SMITH

What about South America?

DOCTOR

Leave that to Madame. . . .

MISS SMITH

But the boat leaves at one!

DOCTOR

Leave everything to Madame. She's a great general!

BICE

Quick, quick they come.

(The DOCTOR and MISS SMITH run out.

BICE and ARCHIMEDE are up C.)

GERALD

(Entering from off R.)

Good-morning, everybody.

(He is in high good spirits.)

Act III

BICE

Good-morning, ver' happy to see you again.

ARCHIMEDE

Ver' happy, ver' happy!

(Runs off.)

GERALD

Well, well, Bice, orange blossoms n' everything, eh?

BICE

Si Signore, my prayers have been answered, and we are all content.

GERALD

You're a good soul, Bice.

(Enter LISA in an adorable negligee.)

LISA

Buon giorno, Bice.

GERALD

(Sings.)

Ah! Bella figlia dell amore!

Enter Madame

LISA

My Gerald! you grow musical.

GERALD

Why not? You look lovely enough to drag a song out of a hippo. Doesn't she, Bice?

BICE

My Signora is happy at last! The saints be blessed!

(LISA sits at table opposite GERALD.)

GERALD

How will you like settling down in America, Bice?

BICE

Eh, what is?

LISA

(Pours coffee which BICE passes to GERALD.)

Yes, Bice, no more opera. I have decided firmly! From today, you and me, we raise chickens.

Act III

GERALD

Ah, well, not quite that, but Mrs. Fitzgerald and I will spend part of our time in the country down at Bellmore. You remember our place at Bellmore, Bice, don't you?

LISA

The big garden, the wide house with the chimney that is always smoking; it used to remind me of a very fat lady squatting in a meadow, smoking a pipe, too lazy to move.

GERALD

And the peace Bice . . . oh the peace!

LISA

The orchestra of the crickets! Like—a far away rendition of Richard Strauss!

BICE

(With distaste.)

Oh la! la!

Enter Madame

LISA

Oh, yes Bice, and the brasses are the frogs. . . .

(*Imitates.*)

Ra! Ra! Ra! Ra! Beautiful!! Wonderful!!

BICE

We do not go to South America then?

LISA

Certainly not! Of course not!

GERALD

Certainly not, what an idea. Never heard of the place. I'm going to make a farmerette of Lisa.

LISA

I shall wear what they call—over-all—that is trousers! So free for the country. . . .

BICE

Like Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*!

Act III

LISA

A good idea! You remember Gerald, how pretty I look as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*!

GERALD

Oh, ripping, darling, ripping! But what will John say to all this?

(Rises, goes around arm-chair to LISA.)

LISA

Oh, Johnnie I forgot. . . .

(BICE goes out.)

GERALD

(Tenderly.)

Never mind you shall wear what you like only promise me that you'll never leave me again. Promise me that!

LISA

On my soul! Henceforward I shall be like the shadow that the sun casts now to the

Enter Madame

east, now to the west, but always close beside you.

GERALD

My Lisa!

LISA

Into your dear hands I place my life. I have no strength, no will, but yours. My Gerald.

GERALD

My wife, my beloved wife! Of course I don't expect you to give up everything at once, I don't mind you singing at a few performances at the Metropolitan for instance.

(Kisses her and goes down L.)

LISA

And at Covent Garden. Just once in a while.

GERALD

Well, yes—once in a great while, all right.

LISA

And at Milan, they would never forgive

Act III

you if you didn't occasionally let me give them *Delilah* or *Orpheus* and oh, how they adore my *Carmen*! Just occasionally, is it not so—my Gerald. . . .

GERALD

(*Much disturbed.*)

Now look here, let's get this settled. You'll be off again before I know it!

LISA

(*Quickly—rises and goes to GERALD.*)

Oh no! no! Not unless you wish, only when you wish . . . *perhaps never*——

(*Door-bell rings.*)

(*GERALD goes up to door.*)

BICE

(*Passing along corridor at back going toward the door.*)

I think it is the boy with the letters.

(*Noise of colloquy is heard at back—voices of MRS. PRESTON and BICE.*)

Enter Madame

BICE

Madame is not dress. . . .

FLORA

It doesn't matter—that will do. . . .

BICE

But you cannot come in.

FLORA

I'd like to know who's going to keep me out!

(BICE backs toward door trying to stem the tide. LISA and GERALD try to get away, but the panic has held them still in their places too long and they are caught.)

That will do thank you. I can announce myself—good-morning!

(Down C.)

GERALD

(With bluff heartiness.)

Good-morning, Flora, good-morning! Won't you sit down?

Act III

FLORA

No thank you! My stay will be a very short one, I simply wanted to make sure——

(She withers them with a glance. GERALD quails under it; LISA smiles triumphantly.)

(Then to GERALD.)

You didn't answer the telephone last night. . . .

GERALD

I answered it three or four times.

FLORA

You know what I mean perfectly well. I tried to reach you for hours. Finally the operator told me the receiver was off.

GERALD

It must have fallen off.

FLORA

Don't interrupt! Do you think I am a fool? Your behaviour to me has been simply

Enter Madame

scandalous. Well, what excuse have you to offer?

(GERALD *stands in front of her like a naughty child.*)

I only wish my dear husband was alive, he'd deal with you properly. As it is I've put my affairs in the hands of my lawyers. They will call upon you and this lady who is not your wife. You cannot trifle with my reputation and social position, and put me on a level with a common opera singer.

GERALD

Now Mrs. Preston . . .

FLORA

Keep still, or it will go worse with you. And please remember that agreement about a settlement—I shall expect one and don't forget it. There's such a thing as law and public opinion. They'll be on my side and they'll make you pay. Oh, don't imagine that you've broken my heart. It's much better this way. Do you think any woman would

Act III

want you if it weren't that you are wealthy and can provide a good establishment? What do you suppose this woman wants of you except to pay her disgraceful debts and to cover her liaisons with dukes and princes and what not!

GERALD

Now Mrs. Preston. Confine your remarks to me, please.

FLORA

(Hysterically.)

Oh, I'm not through with you yet. You—you—libertine,—with your talk of home and carpet slippers. I won't have to take care of you now in your stuffy old age, but you'll see to it that my nest is feathered or I'll know the reason why! Oh I'm not through with you yet. Oh! no! you wait! You just wait! Good-day to you both!

GERALD

Phew! What a woman!

Enter Madame

LISA

(Recovering. Going up C.)

How dare she, how dare she come into our house and talk so, and I—I couldn't answer back.

GERALD

(Sitting by table.)

No, for the first time in your life darling.

(Laughs.)

LISA

It is as if she were the wife. I should have said to her: "Are you the wife?"

GERALD

Darling, you seem to forget that we are divorced, you and I. . . .

LISA

Yes, and whose fault is it? It is hers! I should have said to her: "You come here and

Act III

you steal my husband, and then you dare . . .
you dare . . .”

*(She turns and suddenly runs toward
the door to catch MRS. PRESTON and to
say all the precious things to her face.)*

GERALD

(Catches her and holds her in his arms.)

Come back here. There, darling, there,
never mind her. I'll pay the piper—it's
worth it, just to have you back in my arms.
We must get married now just as soon as
possible.

LISA

(Absently.)

Yes,

(Then intensely.)

but think—think of all the things I could
have said to her!

GERALD

(Amused.)

Yes, dear, I know all the things you could

Enter Madame

have said to her. I'm glad you didn't say them. After all she's been handed a pretty rough deal; now let's forget her.

(Door-bell rings.)

LISA

(JOHN'S voice is heard off stage.)

Oh! oh, it's John—I forget.

GERALD

Don't let him in. He mustn't see me in these clothes.

(Rushes off R.)

JOHN and ALINE

(Enter JOHN and ALINE.)

Hello, mother, is father here already?

(LISA meets her son and ALINE at the door to give GERALD a chance to escape.)

LISA

Hello, darling, yes, yes, he's here.

Act III

JOHN

Say what's happened now? As I came into the lobby a reporter came up to me and asked if I was your son; he asked where father was. I said I didn't know, he seemed awfully pleased about something. Mrs. Preston was down there talking to a group of men, they all turned and looked at us. I heard her say as I passed "You'd better go and find out for yourselves."

(There's a ring at the phone.)

LISA

I'll answer. I better answer.

(At phone.)

Allo! Yes, it's me, who wants . . . I cannot receive at this hour. Impossible! What! No I have not, I have no story for the press. Mr. Fitzgerald is not here. . . . How dare you . . . what business is it of yours. How dare you . . . how dare you . . . how dare you . . .

(There's a ring at the door-bell. BICE passes to answer.)

Enter Madame

GERALD

(Rushes from room off R. to door up centre.)

Bice, don't let them in.

(To LISA.)

Flora has loosed the whole of the yellow press on us!

LISA

(Into phone.)

How dare you! I will call the police. I'll call the police.

GERALD

(Rushing down to her.)

Lisa for God's sake don't talk like that to them.

(LISA rings off.)

JOHN

(Who for the first time sees his father's clothes.)

Father, what are you doing in your evening clothes?

Act III

GERALD

(Walking hurriedly about stage.)

I wear them all the time now—they are more becoming.

JOHN

I say! What do you mean by that?

GERALD

Ah, mind your own business.

(Ring at the bell.)

JOHN

Look here sir, this is my business.

(Phone rings.)

GERALD

Lisa, don't answer it.

JOHN

What do those men downstairs want? What is all this? What are you doing in evening dress at this time in the morning?

(Then suddenly the truth bursts in upon him. Indignantly:)

Oh! Oh!

Enter Madame

GERALD

Keep still, keep still and let me think.

JOHN

Oh! Oh! Good gracious.

GERALD

(Yelling.)

Bice, get Archimede to answer the door,
tell those men to go away.

JOHN

Oh! Oh!

(Walks up and down.)

GERALD

You idiot, stop saying "oh." Make yourself
useful.

JOHN

We are disgraced! Oh! Oh!

GERALD

Shut up!

(Phone rings—bell rings.)

(Enter ARCHIMEDE.)

Act III

GERALD

(Off C.)

Archimede take a rolling pin and go out there and persuade those men to leave. If they won't, carve them up.

ARCHIMEDE

Si Signore.

GERALD

Tell them there's no one here.

(Phone rings.)

JOHN

You sir, go down to your club where you belong. You've no business here.

GERALD

Listen to him.

LIZA

John don't talk so to your father.

JOHN

Aline, you go by the back door, and run home—this is no place for you——

Enter Madame

ALINE

But Johnnie, what is the matter with everybody?

(Phone rings.)

GERALD

John answer that phone. Tell them to shut up.

JOHN

I won't unless you leave this house at once.

GERALD

If you say that again I'll thrash you within an inch of your life.

JOHN

No you won't—no you won't. And I will say it again!

(Phone rings, GERALD seizes JOHN and pushes him toward the phone.)

Answer that phone!

LISA

(Rushing to the rescue.)

Answer it. Johnnie darling, please! For

Act III

my sake, be careful what you say to them.
My publicity depends upon them.

JOHN

(At phone.)

Hello. Yes. Well, it's all a misunderstanding. I am her son. Yes . . . it's wrong, you've got it all wrong. . . . Well—well—Mrs. Preston is wrong—she—she—she's joking!

GERALD

You infernal idiot!

JOHN

Well—what am I to say?

(Into phone.)

No, Madame Della Robbia will see no one.

LISA

Now, Johnnie go down and tell them—tell them—oh, tell them anything but get them away.

(Altercation is heard at the door.)

Enter Madame

ARCHIMEDE

Madame is alone with her son. She'll see no one.

(Bangs door.)

JOHN

Bice, show Aline out the back door will you?

(BICE takes ALINE away.)

(JOHN faces his parents furiously.)

Now look here—you two.

LISA

(Phone rings.)

Oh Johnnie, go down and tell them anything, only get them away. I'm going mad.

JOHN

First send father away—it isn't proper!

LISA

(An idea.)

Gerald! I know what we'll do, we'll go to South America!

GERALD

Right, you're on.

Act III

JOHN

(Dramatically.)

Stop! Listen!

GERALD

Stop, LOOK, listen! That's the way it goes, Johnnie.

JOHN

I'm serious! I was never more serious in all my life.

GERALD

Good Lord!

LISA

Quiet—Gerald!

JOHN

You aren't married! Don't you remember you were divorced yesterday?

LISA

Oh, oh yes, I forgot. *We both forgot.*

(Phone rings.)

Oh John, tell them you are coming down to them!

Enter Madame

JOHN

I will if you promise to do just as I say.

(GERALD *motions her to say yes.*)

(*Phone rings.*)

LISA

We'll do anything you want.

JOHN

(*At phone.*)

Stop this noise. I am coming down to you.
Yes this is Mr. Fitzgerald. I am coming.

(*Rings off.*)

(*Turns to parents.*)

Now you'll do as I say. I've stood enough
from you. You're an awful responsibility.

GERALD

(*Loudly.*)

All right. Keep your voice down. Don't
shout!

JOHN

(*Furiously.*)

Will you answer me one question?

Act III

GERALD

Certainly.

JOHN

Did I ask to be born? Did I ask to be born? Answer me that.

GERALD

(In a fit of laughter falls into the arm-chair, then recuperating:)

Why, we gave you the gift of life.

JOHN

Oh, that's no good. That won't work nowadays. You tell me if it's right to treat me like this, when I never asked to be born. I didn't choose you to be my parents, God knows, but I've got to put up with you and you've got to put up with me. You can't go on living as if I weren't here. You've got to think of me, and of my future, and of the dignity of the family——

(Goes threateningly to GERALD.)

The dignity of the family, do you hear?

Enter Madame

LISA

Yes, yes, Johnnie, you are right. Now if you will go down and get those wicked reporters away,—I promise that we will do anything you want, anything at all.

GERALD

There now.

JOHN

First I want to see father leave this house.

LISA

But he can't, at the door there are men.

JOHN

Well, he can go by the back door.

LISA

(Soothingly.)

All right, Gerald, go by the back door, go by the back door.

GERALD

Well—I'll be . . .

(Exits off R.)

Act III

LISA

There—there . . . he is gone—Now you go down and save the family honour! The family honour, it rests with you!

JOHN

All right, I will——

(Goes.)

(You hear his voice outside.)

Here I am gentlemen—I can explain everything to you.

(Outside—door closes.)

(LISA rushes to bedroom door.)

LISA

Gerald—Gerald—come,—I know, I know what we will do!

GERALD

What darling?

LISA

We will elope to South America!

GERALD

Right you are. Can we make it?

Enter Madame

LISA

I'll send Miss Smith to Weissman. They will keep the steamer waiting as long as possible. We run with only a few things. The rest of the baggage follow later.

GERALD

All right, dear, you see Miss Smith, I won't be long.

(Exits R.)

LISA

Miss Smith—Bice! Come I want you.

(LISA runs off stage at C.)

(Enter TAMAMOTO from back with a suitcase.)

GERALD

(Enters looking for his hat and comes face to face with TAMAMOTO.)

Tamamoto!—how did you know I was here?

TAMAMOTO

I know. I deduct.

Act III

GERALD

(Throwing his hat on the table.)

You deduct! Japan will rule the world
some day; come here with that bag, hurry!

(Goes into bedroom with TAMAMOTO.)

LISA

*(Entering with BICE. The DOCTOR and
ARCHIMEDE follow with portman-
teaux.)*

Come Bice, Archimede, *Dottore*, you know
what you have to do.

*(Rushes into bedroom with BICE. ARCHI-
MEDE and the DOCTOR begin packing
the things that had been unpacked in
Act I.)*

DOCTOR

We must make the ship in twenty minutes,
quick Archimede!

BICE

(Reappearing.)

Where is the rouge? . . . Ah . . .
eccolo! eccolo! . . . Presto, presto.

Enter Madame

DOCTOR

Non lo so—non lo so. . . .

LISA

(Entering half dressed.)

My attar of roses . . . I cannot elope
without my attar of roses!

BICE

Eccolo, eccolo!

(LISA rushes into bedroom.)

DOCTOR

Oh—*Madonna mia*—what a life!

ARCHIMEDE

Viva la Baldoria! Dottore, we go to Buenos Ayres, eh?

DOCTOR

Yes! yes!

ARCHIMEDE

Do you remember my Carmencita, the girl
that was *ballerina* at the opera?

Act III

DOCTOR

Why should I remember? Perhaps you have a reason.

ARCHIMEDE

Oh, la la! Let me see——

(Consulting address-book.)

Amsterdam, Antwerp,—Bologna, Buenos Ayres. There! Ah, no! she is not my Carmencita—she is my Dolores, oh la! la! she's my best girl!

DOCTOR

(Seizes screen and small portmanteau.

ARCHIMEDE follows with a hamper and they rush off. LISA enters in the same hat and coat she wore in the first act. She carries a small dog in her arms. GERALD follows wrapped in a large overcoat. BICE loaded down with hand luggage and TAMAMOTO carrying a suitcase and a parrot cage close the procession.)

Enter Madame

LISA

(Triumphantly.)

Wego! Wego!

GERALD

Hurry Tamamoto, Bice.

LISA

(Happily.)

Now we run by the back door—here Gerald,
you hold Toto!

GERALD

(Suddenly.)

No, no, Lisa, I won't.

LISA

But Gerald!

GERALD

Now look here darling, you are making me
do all the things I swore I'd never do again.
You're going off to sing—you drag me along
and you want me to carry that damned pup.
I won't do it, I tell you, I won't!

Act III

LISA

But Gerald—*Madonna mia*. We can't leave Toto.

GERALD

Very well, then, you can leave me.

(Sits on sofa.)

LISA

(Phone rings.)

Oh, Gerald—Gerald—not again!

GERALD

Oh, give me the damn dog.

(Exits with dog under his arm. LISA follows.)

BICE

(Standing in doorway.)

Exit Madame.

CURTAIN

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By

Lady Gregory

Author of "Seven Short Plays," etc.

The Dragon; Aristotle's Bellows; The Jester.

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IF

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